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Deception in Soviet Strategic Missile Claims, 1957-1962 (U)

Arnold L. Horelick and Myron Rush

May 1963

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SUMMARY

FOR FOUR YEARS after the test firing of a Soviet ICBM vehicle in August 1957, great uncertainties pervaded U.S. intelligence estimates of the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program. The expectation that the USSR would rapidly acquire a substantial force of first-generation ICBM's dominated intelligence estimates throughout this period, although firm evidence of large-scale Soviet ICBM deployment failed to materialize. Moreover, during 1960 marked divergencies arose in the intelligence community regarding the size of the Soviet ICBM force that was operational. The chief grounds of uncertainties regarding the Soviet ICBM program were the understanding of Soviet intentions then current among Western leaders and their advisers, the strategic requirements that were believed to guide Soviet military policy, and the enhanced appreciation of Soviet missile technology as demonstrated by impressive space launchings and ICBM flight tests.

By the fall of 1961, however, U.S. intelligence had succeeded in resolving much of the previous uncertainty about the Soviet strategic missile force and produced high confidence estimates that the USSR had acquired only a token force of operational ICBM's.

Granted that the West's exaggeration of Soviet strategic missile capabilities brought immediate political benefits to the USSR, the question naturally arises: Were the Soviet leaders merely passive beneficiaries of the mistaken Western beliefs? Or did they actively help to shape the West's expectations so that its uncertainties were resolved by exaggerating the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program? To resolve this problem the authors, in Part One, examine the Soviet leaders' claims regarding their strategic missile capabilities and evaluate them in the light of accessible intelligence information.* This retrospective evaluation reveals a gap between the actual Soviet ICBM program and what the Soviet leaders said about it, a gap so large as to compel the conclusion that the Soviet leaders, principally Khrushchev and some top military figures, have practiced deliberate, systematic, and sustained strategic deception.

* For the procedures employed to get the necessary intelligence inputs for this study, see the Preface.

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A striking characteristic of Soviet strategic claims, when looked at as a whole, is their internal consistency and the logical sequence of their development; despite their false basis in reality, successive claims built on their predecessors and prepared the way for those to follow. The claims were carefully set against the background of Soviet space exploits, which contributed substantially to their credibility. By establishing a rough equivalence of space exploits and missile capabilities, the Soviets converted their space program into a sustained series of military demonstrations.

The claims were often expressed with exuberance, especially when voiced by Khrushchev, but it was controlled exuberance—not the spontaneous expression of elation or other powerful emotions. The Soviet leaders doubtless meant to communicate misleading hints about the Soviet missile program and particularly about their ability to strike the United States. Simple fabrications were interspersed with claims that became valid only with the lapse of time. The Soviet leaders generally formulated the claims with care, using a wide variety of deceptive verbal techniques for this purpose. They used ambiguous terms to convey vague or equivocal claims. The West's predisposition to resolve ambiguities in the direction of exaggerating Soviet capabilities was often enough to bring about the desired result, but special devices were sometimes used, such as placing ambiguous claims in misleading contexts or in contrived temporal series. (The verbal devices employed by the Soviet leaders are analyzed in detail in Part Three of this report.)

Deceptive Soviet ICBM claims were meant to serve a variety of purposes and to influence the beliefs and behavior of a whole range of audiences.* In a general sense, the target of Soviet missile deception was world opinion at large, including certain groups in the Soviet Union itself. Although the Soviet leaders might have preferred to convey certain impressions to particular audiences and not to others, or to convey different impressions to different audiences, the requirements of internal logic and systematic exposition in an age of world-wide communications places severe limitations on their freedom to tailor deceptive claims to achieve such diversified effects. The price for attempting to achieve the desired effect on one audience may be the risk that the same message will have an undesirable effect elsewhere. For example, to achieve the desired political effect on Western and neutral audiences, the Soviet leaders made ICBM claims that encouraged their restless Chinese allies to press for new Soviet commitments that the USSR was evidently reluctant to give. Similarly, the effects on a single audience, or on influential groups within a single society, may be ambivalent. Thus, the Soviet leaders found that in addition to the favorable political

*In this study the targets of the deception have usually been identified in such general terms as "the U.S.," "the West," and "neutral opinion," and have been specified only when there is reason to believe that a particular audience was meant to be influenced in special ways by a particular claim.

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consequences that flowed from their success in misleading U.S. opinion regarding the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program, there were also undesirable consequences, namely, stimulation of U.S. arms programs. Some unfavorable consequences may have been anticipated; others may not have been, or their extent may have been underestimated. The Soviet leaders may also have had exaggerated expectations regarding the political benefits that would accrue from successful deception. It is apparent, at any rate, that in undertaking to engage in deception, the Soviet leaders calculated, rightly or wrongly, that acceptance of the costs and risks that might be involved was warranted by expected gains.

Ultimately, the chief objective of the Soviet leaders was to influence the policies of Western, and particularly U.S., decisionmakers, in ways that favored Soviet interests. Given the nature of the political process in Western societies and within the Western alliance as a whole, the conduct of the cold war by Western leaders can be affected without actually changing the beliefs of the leaders. It is possible to influence the West's policy by persuading the governments, parties or peoples allied to the United States, as well as influential groups in America itself. The Communists can bring pressure and propaganda to bear at many more points than the West, because all the groups mentioned, as well as articulate opinion in neutral countries, can make their influence felt in Washington.

More rapid and far-reaching effects could be achieved by directly influencing the estimates and beliefs of the U.S. President and his advisers. The Soviet leaders attempted to do this not only by pointed assertions given world-wide dissemination, but also in private conversations with U.S. diplomats and political leaders as well as those of the allies who could be expected to make them known to the U.S. administration.

Clearly, the Soviet ICBM deception achieved its greatest success among groups that did not have full access to the relevant information that the West did possess. But even within the U.S. intelligence community, deceptive Soviet claims, supported by technical demonstrations, contributed to the persistence of mistaken beliefs about the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program that were not corrected until more than four years after the first Soviet ICBM test.

It is now evident that Soviet leaders practiced deception even in the early months after the August 1957 test firing of the first Soviet ICBM vehicle, although their claims in that period may only have anticipated what they could reasonably expect to achieve soon. For example, Khrushchev claimed "possession" of a "fully perfected" ICBM long before all the essential components of a complete weapon system had been tested. The deception clearly involved fabrication, however, after the middle of 1958, by which time the Soviet leaders had decided not to produce or deploy the first-generation ICBM (SS-6) in large numbers, but to hasten the development of a second-generation ICBM (SS-7) that was designed to

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overcome some of the operational deficiencies of the SS-6. Subsequently, the Soviet leaders claimed current ICBM capabilities that they knew would require the development, production, and deployment of an entirely new system.

Beginning in late 1958, Khrushchev made a series of increasingly expansive claims regarding production of the Soviet ICBM: first, that production had been set up (November 1958); next, that the ICBM was in "serial production" (January 1959), and finally, in January 1960, that it was in "mass production." These statements clearly implied a transition from manufacture of individual prototype ICBM's to production of larger numbers. Although they could not be translated into absolute numbers, the claims were understood in the intelligence community to mean that progressively larger numbers of ICBM's were being made available for operational purposes. Actually, only a minor part of the total production of the SS-6 was ever deployed; production was primarily for research and development and for space boosters. In speaking of "serial" and particularly "mass" production, Khrushchev deliberately sought to persuade the West that Soviet ICBM's were being produced in substantial numbers for early deployment.

As early as February 1959, Defense Minister Malinovsky, seconded by several other marshals of the Soviet Union, spoke of the Soviet armed forces having been "equipped" with ICBM's. According to current estimates, this was almost a full year before the earliest date that the USSR could have had even a small initial operational capability (IOC) with the SS-6 missile. In late 1959 and early 1960, when the USSR had at most an IOC of no more than ten ICBM's, Khrushchev made a series of far-reaching claims implying the existence of a large operational ICBM capability. The Soviet Union, he announced, has "enough nuclear weapons . . . and the corresponding rockets to deliver this weapon to the territory of a possible aggressor . . . so that we could literally wipe from the face of the earth the country or countries that attacked us." Thus, the claimed capacity to destroy the NATO countries of Europe with missiles, which had long been asserted, was extended to include the USSR's chief opponent, the United States. This claim of an ICBM capability to destroy the United States, although it was expressed metaphorically, was twice repeated by Khrushchev and subsequently echoed by top military leaders. It culminated the series of development and production claims regarding the ICBM that characterized the preceding two years.

The whole series of deceptive claims was probably meant to further several distinct aims: (a) to conceal from the West that the Soviet leaders had decided to deploy only a token force of SS-6 ICBM's, thereby foregoing the opportunity to achieve a substantial lead over the United States in first-generation ICBM's and accepting a prolongation and even worsening of the already unfavorable strategic balance; (b) to help deter a U.S. attack on the Soviet Union by raising doubts in the minds of the U.S. leaders as to the superiority of American

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strategic forces; (c) to provide a promising environment for offensive political moves, as against West Berlin; and (d) to justify certain domestic measures to the military, such as troop reduction enacted in January 1960.

The scope of Soviet deception fluctuated widely. When the West seemed highly uncertain regarding the Soviet ICBM program's progress, when the Soviet space program achieved spectacular successes, or when domestic or foreign exigencies required it, Moscow's strategic claims were correspondingly inflated. When the West demonstrated confidence in a low estimate of Soviet missile capabilities against the United States, Soviet claims were directed to the relatively modest aim of gaining credit for an assured capacity to retaliate against the United States. This was to become the principal Soviet aim in the fall of 1961, when U.S. intelligence revised the estimated operational Soviet ICBM force downward and expressed confidence in the new estimate.

What effect did the practice of deception in Soviet strategic missile claims have on the course of the cold war? Such claims doubtless encouraged the West to exaggerate the Soviet capacity to strike the United States. In the short term, the degree of success in deception achieved by the Soviet leaders altered the environment in which the cold war was conducted during 1957-1961 to the advantage of the USSR. It complicated the West's task in fashioning strategies and tactics to resist communist political offensives, exacerbated strains in the Western alliance, and enhanced the appeal of the USSR to neutralist countries, in some cases perhaps encouraging them to turn to the USSR for support against rival states. Yet, if the Soviet leaders expected to convert these new opportunities into decisive political gains (for example, in Berlin), they must have been disappointed in the outcome. It may now appear to the Soviet leaders that their deception, insofar as it led the United States to exaggerate the size and scope of the Soviet ICBM program, will have long-term costs outweighing whatever temporary advantages it brought about. For the United States was led to increase substantially its programmed strategic force, thereby enhancing U.S. strategic superiority and giving a new stimulus to the arms race.

The Soviet response to the publicly expressed U.S. view of the strategic balance in the fall of 1961, which was based on a reduced estimate of the Soviet ICBM force, is examined in Part Two of this report. The analysis strongly suggests (a) that the Soviet leaders credit American leaders with believing what the American press presented as revised U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, and (b) that these estimates were in fact more nearly correct than previous ones. ✓

The main objective of the Soviet response has evidently been to deprive the assertions of U.S. leaders of their political value by again insisting that the Soviet Union has an adequate retaliatory capability. Claims of Soviet military superiority have become rare. Soviet

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leaders now tend to speak of the balance of political forces rather than of the military balance itself. A new characteristic of Soviet statements on the strategic balance since mid-1961 has been their explicit expression of a readiness to accept strategic parity as the basic assumption from which political settlements should proceed. This theme has replaced the earlier emphasis, particularly noticeable in 1960, on the Soviet Union as the world's strongest military power.

Accompanying this development has been a change in the character of Soviet claims regarding the USSR's strike capability against the United States. The Soviet leaders now emphasize the certainty that retaliation would occur rather than the level of destruction that could be inflicted. At times they seek only to stimulate U.S. uncertainty about whether unacceptable damage could be avoided. The formulation, "wipe from the face of the earth," which Khrushchev applied in 1959 and 1960 to any hostile country that might attack the USSR, is now applied only to restricted categories of targets in the United States. This kind of statement, however, continues to be applied to countries allied with the United States, which Khrushchev spoke of in September 1961 as "hostages to the USSR and a guarantee against war." Thus, in the Soviet response to changes in the American appraisal of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance, the mortal threat against U.S. allies has been re-emphasized as a means of eliciting pressure on the United States to avoid policies that risk general war.

Another effort to compensate for the discrediting of Soviet ICBM claims has been the more favorable public evaluation by Soviet leaders of weapon carriers they had formerly downgraded, notably manned bombers—now said to be equipped with air-to-surface missiles—and nuclear submarines. Until 1961 Soviet leaders depreciated manned bombers, on which the United States was said to rely, asserting their vulnerability to Soviet air defenses, and contrasted them with ballistic missiles, on which the USSR supposedly relied to deliver nuclear weapons, stressing their invulnerability to existing means of defense.

The Soviet leaders have also exploited their tests of high-yield thermonuclear bombs in the fall of 1961 to lessen the effects of American press reports that the Soviet ICBM force was now estimated to be quite small. Soviet leaders attempted to support their claims of a powerful retaliatory capability, despite the availability of relatively few intercontinental delivery vehicles, by multiplying the destructive capacity of each carrier.

While these changes in Soviet declaratory policy all appear to acknowledge implicitly that the old claims of strategic superiority, which relied exclusively on the Soviet strategic missile force, are no longer credible, the Soviet leaders have not addressed themselves explicitly to the revised U.S. estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities as reported in the American press. Instead, they have resorted to indirect means of refutation, such as the publication of photographs of what are termed operational Soviet missiles (including one of an IRBM

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identified as an "intercontinental rocket"), and eyewitness reports of visits to Soviet missile bases and missile-launching submarines. Current claims about the numerical strength of the Soviet ICBM force speak of "sufficient" or "necessary" numbers, without specifying the purpose for which the force is "sufficient" or "necessary." In general, emphasis on the *qualitative superiority* of Soviet weapons and on Soviet *primacy in developing new weapons* (for example, the "global" rocket and the ABM) have become the dominant themes in the Soviet leaders' statements on military affairs.

Both Khrushchev and Malinovsky have continued to imply the adequacy of the Soviet ICBM force. Khrushchev announced to the XXII CPSU Congress (October 1961) that the rearmament of the Soviet armed forces with nuclear and rocket weapons—presumably including ICBM's—was "completely finished." This can be reconciled with U.S. intelligence estimates of mid-1961 Soviet ICBM capabilities only if it is interpreted as an announcement that the deployment of the small programmed SS-6 force had been completed, but Khrushchev clearly intended his announcement to convey the impression that large numbers of rockets of various types had become operational. Similarly, Marshal Malinovsky's statement to the congress that Soviet weapons were being "renewed and improved" was consistent with recent evidence that the new lighter weight, less cumbersome SS-7 missile, which uses storable propellants, was becoming operational. Malinovsky implied, however, that improved weapons would enter the force only in the quantity necessary to replace older models; in fact, it has been estimated (mid-1962) that the number of SS-7's already made operational substantially exceeds the total number of SS-6 missiles deployed.

What lessons concerning the intelligence value of Soviet claims can be drawn from deceptive Soviet practices in the period 1957–1962? By 1957 Soviet military claims had acquired a certain reputation for credibility. On the basis of previous Soviet practices, most specialists had come to believe that the Soviet leaders, although they might exaggerate Soviet military power and technological progress for political advantage, did not deliberately make false claims. After Khrushchev's rise to power, the political use of military claims increased substantially and the strain of exaggeration in them became more obvious; nevertheless, Soviet space successes after 1957 tended to enhance further the credibility of Soviet military-technological claims.

Today, with our improved understanding of the Soviet missile program of recent years, we are able to re-evaluate the credibility of Soviet strategic claims and their intelligence value. The validity of Soviet claims is not something fixed, but may lessen or increase. One cannot be sure whether the Soviet leaders, having observed the results of their practice of deception regarding missiles, will decide to narrow the gap between claim and reality or to widen it further. Future claims cannot simply be rejected or discarded because of the recent

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record of Soviet deception. On the contrary, if they seem relevant for assessing Soviet military power, future military claims must continue to be scrutinized with great care. In approaching them, however, it is important to bear in mind certain distinctions. Assertions about the development of weapons tend to be more accurate than those regarding deployment or operational capabilities. Soviet military claims should be examined closely to distinguish as precisely as possible between what they assert explicitly and what they only imply. The Soviet leaders have shown themselves more prone to convey falsehoods by indirect hints than to assert them explicitly. Until their record for credibility has improved, however, Soviet military claims probably deserve less weight than before when placed in the balance with other types of evidence.

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PREFACE

IN THE LATE SUMMER and fall of 1961, U.S. uncertainty regarding the Soviet strategic missile force, particularly ICBM's, was sharply reduced, and the intelligence community produced relatively high confidence estimates of these forces. The new estimates, as is well known, contrast markedly with claims made by the top Soviet political and military leaders in the preceding years. These claims are examined below, in the light of accessible intelligence information, to determine the nature and extent of the disparity between claims and reality, and to establish how far the Soviet leaders deliberately engaged in deception. This study also examines the character of the Soviet public response to the revised U.S. estimates, which were widely publicized. Finally, the report analyses the rhetoric of Soviet strategic deception.

To evaluate particular Soviet claims it was necessary to discover, as far as possible, the true situation at the time the claim was made. For this purpose we examined available published intelligence materials during the period in question, 1957-1962. These materials, though valuable to us, suffered from the uncertainty regarding Soviet strategic missile capabilities that pervaded U.S. official circles during much of this period.

In order to elicit informed estimates, based on currently available information, of relevant aspects of the Soviet strategic missile program at the time particular Soviet missile claims were publicized, two means were employed. First, the Foreign Technology Division of the Air Force Systems Command was asked to supply the necessary intelligence data for the study, which were described in a detailed list of our needs. FTD's useful response took the form of a letter with attachments dated March 27, 1962. In addition, these matters were discussed extensively and at firsthand with informed specialists in the government.

The focus of the study is on the description and analysis of Soviet strategic missile claims and an examination of their conformity to the postulated real situation that has been reconstructed from the intelligence data. The authors have avoided, as far as possible, making judgments about the data used.

Moreover, our object has *not* been to write an intelligence appraisal of the Soviet strategic missile program. Some of the elements of such a study can be elicited from this report.

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but they are used with such a special orientation that they would be unsuitable as a basis for constructing an over-all picture of the Soviet missile program. The authors' intelligence interests were shaped by the character of the Soviet claims they examined, and by questions of credibility posed by these claims. The correctness of the inferences made frequently depends on the validity of judgments regarding particular aspects of the Soviet ICBM program that were obtained from the intelligence community. Naturally, if those judgments prove to be erroneous, findings in this study that depend on them may have to be modified. The cut-off date for the intelligence inputs used in this study is mid-1962.

Since the subject of the study is deception in Soviet strategic missile claims, it has been necessary to consider the political purposes that were meant to be served by the deception. This has required the authors to consider what results the Soviet leaders might have anticipated from their deception, as well as the results actually produced. Although it is clear that Western audiences, in varying degree, did in fact exaggerate the pace and scope of the Soviet missile program, it has not been possible to determine precisely the relative influence of deceptive Soviet practices as compared with other causative factors. The authors have concluded, however, that Soviet deception played an important role in heightening existing uncertainties about the Soviet missile program.

This report continues the work of the authors on the political advantages and limitations of particular strategic postures that have been claimed or may yet be claimed by the Soviet leaders. (See *The Political Use of Soviet Strategic Power*, The RAND Corporation, RM-2831-PR, January 1962, For Official Use Only.)

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Among the individuals consulted were Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Reynolds (AFNIN); Edward Risley and Commander Frank Colenda (DIA); William Lee, Walter Seidel, John Vogel, and Irwin Halpern (CIA); and Charles Flowerree (State Department). These specialists and others who were consulted, of course, bear no responsibility for the interpretations and conclusions reached in the study.

The following RAND colleagues read the manuscript and offered useful comments and criticisms: Brewster Denny, Herbert S. Dinerstein, Alexander L. George, and Frederick M. Sallagar. The authors benefited particularly from extensive discussions of various drafts with Daniel Ellsberg. Charles B. Carey assisted in preparation of the summary. Major O. Grady Dean, USAF, arranged for intelligence data to be provided by FTD. Extensive research assistance was provided by Janet Dorsch.

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Some leaders of the West automatically expressed doubts, but on second thought promptly stated that if the Russians said so, it means that serial production of missiles has certainly been organized. This is really so.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV
February 1959

While the Soviets use rigid security as a military weapon their Iron Curtain is not so impenetrable as to force us to accept at face value the Kremlin's boasts.

ROSWELL GILPATRIC
Deputy Secretary of Defense
October 1961

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Part One

I. THE PROBLEM OF CREATING ICBM'S IS SOLVED:
AUGUST 1957-SEPTEMBER 1958

CHARACTER OF THE CLAIM

ON AUGUST 26, 1957, the official Soviet news agency, TASS, announced that a "super-long-range multi-stage intercontinental ballistic rocket"¹ had recently been successfully tested and that the results indicated "it is now possible to send missiles to any part of the world." TASS stated that the USSR had solved the problem of creating ICBM's.² A second Soviet ICBM test firing on September 7, 1957, was later disclosed to the French political leader, Daladier, by Khrushchev, who claimed that he had personally witnessed the launching.³ There was no official announcement of this test, but it must be assumed that Khrushchev intended his claim to be made known to Western governments. Since these initial revelations, only the extended range firings into the Pacific Ocean in 1960 and 1961 of what were officially termed "scientific rockets" have been publicly announced.

In the six-week period between the TASS ICBM announcement and the launching of Sputnik I (October 4, 1957), the Soviet press published several articles on the technical characteristics of ballistic missiles, emphasizing their speed of flight, high altitude, long range, relative accuracy, and ability to hit distant targets with little or no warning; but it was *not* claimed that the vehicle actually tested by the USSR possessed these attributes.⁴ Khrushchev himself did not comment on the Soviet ICBM during this period, though he later revealed that he was the true author of the very widely publicized statement on the strategic implications of new weapons developments that was published in *Pravda* on September 8, 1957, as an interview with Air Marshal K. Vershinin.

¹The Russian expression, "intercontinental ballistic rocket," is equivalent to "ICBM." In directly quoting the Russian, the closest English equivalent of Soviet terminology is given; elsewhere, the more familiar terms, for example, "ICBM," are employed.

²*Pravda*, August 27, 1957.

³Air Technical Intelligence Center, *Soviet Offensive Guided Missile Capabilities* (U), TASK NR. 616101, April 15, 1959 (Secret), p. 32.

⁴See *Sovetskaya Armiya*, August 31, 1957; *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, September 14, 1957; and *Sovetskii Patriot*, September 16, 1957.

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Only after the launching of Sputnik I did Khrushchev publicly assume the role of leading Soviet spokesman on the progress of the Soviet ICBM program and interpreter of its military-political significance. Under his influence, Soviet ICBM claims immediately took on a political color. The emphasis shifted from the prototype testing of an ICBM and the "solution of the problem" of creating ICBM's to formulations that claimed Soviet "possession" of ICBM's. Khrushchev told James Reston of *The New York Times* three days after the Sputnik I launching: "We now have (*u nas seichas est*) all the rockets we need: long-range rockets, intermediate-range rockets and short-range rockets."³ He said in November, following Sputnik II: "I think it is no secret that *there now exists (teper' imeetsia)* a range of missiles with the aid of which it is possible to fulfill any assignment of operational and strategic significance."⁴ Later that month Khrushchev boasted to William R. Hearst, Jr. that "the Soviet Union has available (*raspolagaet*) intercontinental ballistic rockets."⁵

Khrushchev's early comments on the Soviet space successes and their implications for Soviet weaponry were expressed with exuberance, but it was a controlled exuberance. Generally choosing his words with care, he employed such ambiguous expressions as "there now exists" and "we now possess." The claim to "possess" ICBM's and the related claims of this initial period were to evolve in logical sequence, successive claims building on their predecessors and laying the foundation for those to come.⁶ This argues that Khrushchev's early assertions on the ICBM were meant to communicate misleading hints about the state of Soviet armaments and were not merely a spontaneous expression of elation or powerful emotions. That the West was the prime target of this deception may be deduced from Khrushchev's introduction and frequent repetition of his claims, during the fall of 1957, in four interviews with prominent Western correspondents who were sure to publicize them in the West, and from his having omitted them from his key address to a Russian audience on the fortieth anniversary of the Communist Revolution.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

When the TASS announcement on the Soviet ICBM was issued on August 26, 1957, the five-power United Nations Disarmament Subcommittee was in its fifth month of sessions

³ *Pravda*, October 11, 1957. (Italics supplied.) Khrushchev's reference here to sufficiency applies clearly to types of missiles rather than to numbers of any specific type.

⁴ Khrushchev's replies to M. Dempson, correspondent of the *Toronto Telegram*, *International Affairs*, No. 11, November 1957. (Italics supplied.)

⁵ *Pravda*, November 29, 1957.

⁶ An exception to this pattern is Khrushchev's assertion during his interview with Hearst that "we now possess the *absolute* weapon," a characterization of the ICBM that neither Khrushchev nor any other Soviet spokesman was ever to repeat. (Italics supplied.)

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in London. Despite some progress in the spring, by late summer the negotiators had reached an impasse. Nevertheless, the atmosphere remained remarkably free of propagandistic vituperation and recrimination until the meeting of August 27, the day following the TASS announcement of the successful ICBM test, when the Soviet delegate, Zorin, delivered a violent and unexpected attack on the Western powers that signaled the collapse of the negotiations. Two days later Zorin peremptorily declared the most recent Western proposals to be entirely unacceptable to the Soviet Union, and on September 6 the subcommittee recessed without reaching agreement on reconvening.

On August 28, President Eisenhower, expressing his disappointment over the Soviet attack on the latest Western proposal in London, observed: "It is noteworthy that this attack coincides with the boastful statement by the Soviet Union that they have made advances in the development of means for bringing mass destruction to any part of the world. . . ."

While the coincidence of the ICBM test announcement and the hard Soviet turn in London raised Western concern regarding Soviet intentions in the disarmament field, the Soviet leaders did not at that time attempt to bring their ICBM progress to bear directly as a means of securing concessions from the West. The high points of Soviet belligerence in the Syrian-Turkish crisis of 1957, in late August and early October, coincided with the ICBM announcement and the launching of Sputnik I, but the ICBM played only a marginal role in Soviet speeches, notes, and letters during the crisis. This remained true the following year in the Middle East and Quemoy crises: ICBM's were mentioned infrequently in Soviet threats and warnings. Soviet ICBM development was used during this period chiefly to support broad Soviet assertions of the changed character of the international situation.

CLAIMED EFFECTS ON THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

In their public assessments of the effects of Soviet progress in rocket technology on international relations, the Soviet leaders distinguished between its impact on the over-all "correlation of world forces" (a communist concept embracing political, social, economic, as well as military factors) on the one hand, and on the strategic balance, more narrowly defined, on the other. Far more attention was devoted to the former than to the latter. The Soviet leaders quickly proclaimed that a shift in the world correlation of forces in favor of the socialist camp had occurred, but this was attributed to Soviet breakthroughs in science and technology, as evidenced by the Sputniks, rather than specifically to the Soviet ICBM. The key formulation of this period, which was raised to a programmatic level by its inclusion in

¹Statement by President Eisenhower, White House Press Release, August 28, 1957, cited in Bernhard G. Bechhoefer, *Postwar Negotiation for Arms Control*, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1961, p. 399.

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the Moscow Declaration of November 1957, stopped short of explicitly proclaiming that the correlation of forces had already come to favor the socialist camp, but stated that a favorable shift was occurring.¹⁰

Nor was Soviet superiority in the more strictly defined realm claimed at that time. Instead, attention was centered on denying the superiority of the United States in this respect. Soviet publicists stressed that the advent of strategic rockets nullified strategic advantages formerly possessed by the United States:

1. The United States had lost its traditional advantage of relative invulnerability to direct attack.
2. The importance of strategic aviation, on which the United States was said to rely, was sharply reduced by the advent of ICBM's, which could deliver nuclear weapons to distant targets more efficiently and were invulnerable to existing means of defense.
3. U.S. overseas bases, which could now be destroyed quickly and easily by Soviet rockets, had lost their former military value.¹¹

Of these three strategic changes, it was the last two, and particularly the third, that were spelled out most concretely. Although Soviet retaliation against U.S. territory in the event of war was said to be certain, the level of damage that could be inflicted on the United States was left vague. Most frequently, U.S. vulnerability was implied in frequent assertions that the creation of ICBM's had "solved the problem of delivering a hydrogen warhead to any point on the globe," and that "distance is now no obstacle."¹² The most extreme statements of that period were made by Khrushchev, as when he told Henry Shapiro: "If war is not averted, the Americans will experience the most devastating war ever known by mankind. It will rage not only in Europe and Asia, but, with no less fury, in the United States."¹³ Yet in citing the means available to the USSR for striking U.S. targets, Khrushchev was careful in this period not to speak only of ICBM's. He twice mentioned missile-firing submarines along with ICBM's, once listing the submarines before the ICBM's.¹⁴ On both occasions Khrushchev conveyed the impression of an existing Soviet operational ICBM capability, without, however, explicitly claiming it. Thus, he told Shapiro that "modern military techniques *make it possible* with submarines and with the help of ballistic rockets to keep all of America's

¹⁰ *Pravda*, November 22, 1957.

¹¹ See, for example, "A Policy from Positions of Folly," *International Affairs*, No. 12, 1957; M. Rubinstein, "Science and International Relations," *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, No. 6, June 1958; and N. Inozemtsev, "Atomic Diplomacy of the U.S.A.: Projects and Reality," *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, No. 3, March 1958.

¹² See, for example, Gromyko's UN speech of September 30, 1957; Khrushchev's replies to *Toronto Telegram* questions, *International Affairs*, No. 11, November 1957.

¹³ *Pravda*, November 19, 1957.

¹⁴ *Pravda*, November 19 and 29, 1957.

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vital centers under fire, to blockade U.S. ports."¹² In his interview with the Hearst group, he said that a new war, unlike past wars, would be immediately carried to the United States, "because intercontinental ballistic missiles *now make it possible* to hit a target in any area of the globe."¹³ Remarkably, Khrushchev said almost nothing of Soviet manned bombers, although they were probably the only means the Soviet Union then had for an intercontinental strike. Twice in the period he did mention Soviet strategic air power, but only to indicate that new and better delivery means were then available to the USSR. For example, he wrote to Bertrand Russell that the USSR "now possesses the means of fighting against the U.S. if the latter should unleash war against us. The Soviet Union had these means previously also, in the form of intercontinental bombers, but the ballistic rocket is of course an improved weapon."¹⁴

Not only was the level of damage that the USSR could inflict on the United States left vague, but the American targets that Soviet strategic power could destroy were not specified in greater detail than is conveyed by such terms as "territory" and "vital centers." By contrast, statements about both the level of damage and the target system in Western Europe were quite specific and frequently reiterated. If war were unleashed, "the logic of struggle" would require the USSR to strike the network of U.S. bases rimming the Soviet Union. The destructive power of such blows would be so great that the West European NATO countries would be "put out of commission" or "wiped from the face of the earth."

It was during this period that Khrushchev introduced the concept of "country-busting" into Soviet discussions of modern war. Repeatedly he pointed out that the Soviet Union possessed means to destroy entire countries of the NATO alliance. Official government notes and letters warned, for example, that West Germany would have "no chance of survival" and that "the very existence" of Great Britain would be threatened in the event of war.¹⁵ Delivery means were not usually specified, but as Khrushchev pointed out in the Vershinin interview, "One needs no ICBM's to shoot at military bases in Western Europe and also in Turkey, Iran and some other countries."¹⁶

CREDIBILITY

From the time of the first Sputnik launching, Khrushchev tried to make it appear that the ICBM capabilities of the two sides were proportional to their space exploits. Thus, three

¹² *Pravda*, November 19, 1957. (Italics supplied.)

¹³ *Pravda*, November 29, 1957. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁴ *Kommunist*, No. 5, 1958.

¹⁵ *Pravda*, March 31, 1958, and December 7, 1957.

¹⁶ *Pravda*, September 8, 1957.

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days after the launching of Sputnik I, he told James Reston:

When we announced the successful testing of an intercontinental rocket some American statesmen did not believe us. The Soviet Union, they claimed, was saying it had something it did not really have. Now that we have successfully launched an earth satellite, only technically ignorant people can doubt this. The United States does not have an intercontinental ballistic rocket, otherwise it would also easily have launched a satellite of its own. We can launch satellites, because we have a carrier for them, namely—the ballistic rocket.²⁰

In addition to primacy in launching a satellite, Khrushchev sought at once to establish satellite weight as a criterion for estimating the power of the missiles available to the two sides. After the USSR launched its half-ton Sputnik II, he stated in reply to a question:

I am absolutely certain [that the United States does not have the ICBM]. If they had, they would have launched their own sputnik. We launched our sputniks on the basis of our intercontinental ballistic rocket. The United States intends to send up a sputnik weighing 11 kilograms. Is that a ballistic rocket? More, nobody knows when the United States will pitch this satellite. Our first sputnik, on the other hand, weighed 83.6 kilograms, while the second had a useful weight of 508 kilograms. If necessary, we can double the weight of the satellite.²¹

And again later:

We can double and more than double the weight of the satellite, because the Soviet intercontinental rocket has tremendous power, which makes it possible to launch an even heavier satellite to an even greater height.²²

In seeking to squeeze as much ICBM credit from Soviet space accomplishments as he could, Khrushchev went so far, at the end of November 1957, as to claim in effect that the USSR already had a stockpile of up to twenty ICBM boosters. (This was almost a full year before he spoke directly of Soviet ICBM *production*.) He told the Hearst party on November 29, 1957:

The fact that the Soviet Union was the first to launch an artificial earth satellite, which within a month was followed by another, says a lot. If necessary, tomorrow we can launch 10, 20 satellites.²³ All that is required for this is to replace the warhead of an intercontinental ballistic rocket with the necessary instruments. There is a satellite for you.²⁴

²⁰ *Pravda*, October 11, 1957.

²¹ *Pravda*, November 19, 1957.

²² *Pravda*, January 26, 1958. Sputnik III, launched in May 1958, reportedly had a mass of 2925 pounds, that is, 2.6 times that of Sputnik II. It is believed that Sputniks I and II were boosted into orbit by an early lightweight model of what later became the first-generation Soviet ICBM (the SS-6), while Sputnik III and all subsequent Soviet satellites and space probes, except some satellites of the 1962 "Cosmos" series, were launched by the fully developed SS-6 missile. (See p. 8.)

²³ Taken literally, "tomorrow we can launch" implies the existence of a substantial number of launchers, whereas only a single ICBM-type launcher was then in operation (launch-pad "A" at Tyuratam). (Italics supplied.)

²⁴ *Pravda*, November 29, 1957.

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The major Soviet claim of this initial period, that the USSR had won the race to create an intercontinental ballistic missile, readily lent itself to dramatic demonstrations that gained for it a high degree of credibility. Although the U.S. capability to monitor Soviet ballistic missile launches and flights may not have been adequate in 1957 to confirm definitely the Soviet claims of two ICBM test firings in August and September 1957, the subsequent Sputnik launches in October and November 1957 and May 1958 were quickly and widely accepted as confirming the USSR's August 1957 claim. In the first half of 1958, four additional vehicles were detected, apparently fired over a 3500-nautical-mile course from the Tyuratam rangehead to Kamchatka.²⁵

In this early period, U.S. declaratory policy tacitly acknowledged the validity of the Soviet claim to have developed an ICBM, but disputed the Soviet contention that a "real" change had already occurred in the strategic balance. Thus, Secretary Dulles stated at a press conference on August 27 that the existence of a Soviet ICBM did not "initially" affect the present military balance between the two countries.²⁶ Both Dulles and President Eisenhower asserted that manned bombers would continue "for some years to come" to be more accurate and more reliable means for delivering nuclear bombs.²⁷ Although U.S. spokesmen frequently drew a distinction between test firings of new weapons and the acquisition of operational weapons in quantity, the main U.S. response was directed at refuting the Soviet contention that ICBM's had rendered manned bombers obsolete. This tended indirectly to support Soviet efforts to depict the strategic balance as a confrontation of Soviet ICBM's and U.S. manned bombers.

Moreover, while administration leaders denied that Soviet ICBM progress had adversely affected the present U.S. strategic posture, operational measures were soon taken to strengthen current U.S. defenses against Soviet surprise attack. On November 11 *The New York Times* reported that, as of October 1, SAC had been raised to higher levels of alertness to ensure that one-third of the force could be airborne within fifteen minutes after notice. On November 13 the President announced a speed-up in the dispersal of SAC to additional bases and in the provision of facilities for quicker response.²⁸ On January 7 the White House announced that it would request an additional 1.26 billion dollars in defense funds to provide for acceleration of the U.S. ballistic missile program, ballistic missile detection, and SAC alert and dispersal.²⁹

²⁵FTD, TIS-GM-60-2, *Soviet Offensive Guided Missile Capabilities*, February 24, 1960 (Secret), p. 74.

²⁶*The New York Times*, August 27, 1957.

²⁷*The New York Times*, October 3, 16; November 7, 13, 18, 1957.

²⁸*The New York Times*, November 13, 1957.

²⁹*The New York Times*, January 7, 1958.

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The August 1957 TASS announcement of a successful test claimed only that "the problem of creating ICBM's had been solved." This did not assert that a complete weapon system had been developed. It paralleled the formulation employed by Marshal Malinovsky at the XXII CPSU Congress four years later when he reported on Soviet progress in developing an antiballistic missile (ABM): "The problem of destroying rockets in flight has been successfully solved."²⁰ But whereas, in the half-year following Malinovsky's announcement, Soviet ABM claims continued to adhere, in most cases literally, to the Defense Minister's formulation, Khrushchev in 1957 quickly began speaking of Soviet "possession" of ICBM's immediately after the launching of the first Sputniks. Already in November 1957 he spoke of the Soviet ICBM as "fully perfected."²¹ This and other statements made by Khrushchev during this period clearly implied that a *complete weapon system* had been developed, and not merely prototype vehicles for feasibility demonstrations and satellite launchings. Moreover, the Khrushchev statements of late 1957 referred only to the vehicle of the type used to launch Sputniks I and II. (He explicitly claimed that these satellites had been launched on the basis of the Soviet ICBM.)

It is now widely believed in the intelligence community that this vehicle was an early model, employing shorter tankage, of what was eventually developed into the first-generation Soviet ICBM, the SS-6 or Category A ICBM.²² It is believed to have been in the 300,000-pound class, while the later version of the SS-6 is estimated to have a gross weight of 450,000 pounds, the difference presumably being accounted for by the shorter tankage used in the early model. This early lightweight model supposedly was used in the first ICBM tests in August and September 1957, as well as in the early 1958 ICBM tests (January 30 and March 29). Their main objective was probably to check propulsion and staging. It is not known whether any of the vehicle payloads survived re-entry.²³ A test firing on April 4, 1958, from the Tyuratam rangehead to Kamchatka, however, may have employed a full-tankage vehicle, like the one used a month later to boost Sputnik III into orbit. The announced weight of Sputnik III was 2925 pounds, as compared with 1120 for Sputnik II and 184 for Sputnik I.

²⁰ *Pravda*, October 24, 1962.

²¹ *Pravda*, November 29, 1957.

²² At one time it was estimated that the booster used to place Sputniks I and II in orbit was a vehicle of a different type than the SS-6. In some quarters it was believed that the Soviets achieved an early IOC by deploying ICBM's of this type (called "X"-type) in the far north. Other analysts, while estimating that the vehicle used to launch Sputniks I and II was probably different from the SS-6 (first used in the space program as the booster for Sputnik III), argued that the "X"-type vehicle was never fully developed into an ICBM or deployed by the USSR. More recently, as noted above, the generally held view has been that the "X" vehicle was merely an early lightweight model of the SS-6.

²³ Information regarding the Soviet test program was derived largely from a letter with attachments from Headquarters, Foreign Technology Division, AFSC, USAF, to The RAND Corporation, March 27, 1962 (Secret). (Hereafter cited as FTD letter.)

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It would appear, then, that Khrushchev's late 1957 and early 1958 ICBM claims, which implied that the USSR had developed a complete ICBM weapon system ("the absolute weapon, fully perfected"), were based on what were probably only propulsion and staging tests of an early lightweight version of what later became the SS-6. Although much still remained to be done to develop the SS-6 into a complete weapon system, the results of these early tests may have made the Soviets confident that the SS-6 research and development program would be completed successfully at an early date. Thus, Khrushchev's early ICBM claims may have anticipated a stage of development that he believed to be imminent.

Toward the end of the period we are examining, however, an important new decision was taken. It places all subsequent Soviet ICBM claims in a different light. It is now the consensus of the intelligence community that by the middle of 1958 the Soviet leaders had already decided not to produce or deploy the SS-6 in large numbers, but to hasten the development of a second-generation ICBM (the SS-7).³¹ The SS-6, a large and cumbersome vehicle, was likely to be difficult to handle and deploy, since it required rail transport all the way from factory to pad and extensive launch facilities; moreover, it could not be kept in ready-to-fire condition for protracted periods, because it employed nonstorable propellants. When the key decisions were made, it was probably anticipated that some of these difficulties would be overcome by the second-generation ICBM. This less cumbersome vehicle, the SS-7, employs storable propellants and is estimated to have a two-stage configuration, design features that presumably greatly improve the reaction time and enable it to be transported in parts by road to the pad. Although the anticipated advantages of the second-generation ICBM probably entered into the decision not to deploy the SS-6 in large numbers, this crucial decision entailed certain adverse consequences:

1. It meant foregoing an opportunity to achieve a substantial lead over the United States in deployment of first-generation ICBM's. Whatever limitations were placed on its operational usefulness by its cumbersomeness and its use of nonstorable propellants, the SS-6 proved to be fully capable of delivering a 9000-pound nose cone to a nominal range of 6500 nautical miles with good accuracy.³²

2. It meant accepting the risks, however they may have been evaluated, of prolonging the period during which Soviet strategic forces would be markedly inferior to those of

³¹The SS-7 program unfolded in such a way as to make mid-1958 the likely time of the decision to give that program top priority. It is estimated that by early 1959 detailed design and tooling for R&D production of the SS-7 had been initiated. For an account of the SS-7's development, see *Aerospace Intelligence Digest* (Secret), April 1962, pp. 4-6.

³²However, the SS-6 probably did not yet have this capability in mid-1958. It was not until the end of 1959 that the lighter weight, 9000-pound ablative nose cone was tested; previous tests had employed a nose cone estimated to have weighed about 15,000 pounds. And it was not until January 1960 that the first full-range, 6500-nautical-mile firings of the SS-6 were conducted. (FTD letter.)

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the United States. Indeed, the Soviet leaders may then have foreseen that their strategic position relative to the United States would worsen before it could begin to improve, because the first-generation U.S. ICBM's were almost certain to enter the U.S. force before the Soviet Union could begin to deploy SS-7's.

From the time this crucial decision was taken, the character of the deception in Soviet ICBM claims changed radically. No longer could Soviet leaders simply have been anticipating the possession of capabilities that they could reasonably expect soon to acquire; they now began to lay claim to current ICBM capabilities whose acquisition they knew in fact would have to await the development, production, and deployment of an entirely new ICBM system. The expectation that they could, with the aid of deception, conceal the pace and scope of their ICBM program probably was a consideration in the Soviet leaders' decision to wait for the SS-7, though not the only, or even the most important, one. They may also have believed that their decision to procure a very large force of medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM's)—a decision that probably had also been made by mid-1958—provided a measure of insurance (in the form of indirect deterrence of the United States) in the event their deception failed. In any case, it follows from the decisions that the Soviet leaders had made by 1958 with regard to their ICBM programs that they were highly confident of their ability to control the danger of general war even without large intercontinental strike forces-in-being.³⁴

The grounds of this confidence were chiefly political. As had been demonstrate^d during the previous years, U.S. preponderance in strategic forces was not an active threat to the security of the USSR as long as the latter did not take actions that directly menaced vital American interests. Even if a situation seemed likely to arise in which the American incentive to initiate general war might appreciably increase, the Soviet leaders were probably confident that they could readily extricate themselves by political maneuvers, so that ultimate control of the situation would remain in their hands. At the same time the Soviet leaders probably recognized that U.S. leaders were unlikely to make large concessions under pressure from the USSR if they did not believe the Soviet Union was acquiring a strong ICBM force. Moreover, readiness of the NATO allies to make such concessions was likely to grow if their confidence in relative U.S. invulnerability could be shaken. Thus, the Soviet leaders had both strong incentives for seeking to persuade the West that the Soviet Union would rapidly acquire a large ICBM force, and little fear that failure of the deception would endanger the immediate security of the USSR. Not only was deception regarding the Soviet ICBM a useful instrument of an offensive foreign policy, but bold Soviet initiatives tended to make the deceptive claims more credible.

³⁴A full explanation of the reasons for the crucial Soviet decisions, which reflect a multiplicity of technical, economic, political, and strategic considerations, lies beyond the scope of this report.

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II. INITIATION OF PRODUCTION CLAIMS: NOVEMBER 1958-OCTOBER 1959

CHARACTER OF THE CLAIMS

IN THE FIFTEEN MONTHS prior to November 1958, Soviet leaders claimed to have successfully tested the ICBM and to possess a stock of vehicles, but said nothing directly of the production of ICBM's. In that month, however, in a speech on the draft seven-year plan, Khrushchev announced: "The production of the intercontinental ballistic rocket has been successfully set up."¹ Early in January 1959 he distinguished between "creation" and "production" of the ICBM and affirmed Soviet pre-eminence in both.² When presenting the draft plan to the XXI Party Congress about three weeks later, Khrushchev implied that further progress had been made by announcing: "Serial production of the intercontinental ballistic rocket has been successfully organized."³ Later, Khrushchev characterized Soviet ICBM production so as to imply that the highest stage of production had been achieved. Toward the end of 1959 he said the Soviet ICBM was "on the assembly line,"⁴ and shortly afterward he announced to the Supreme Soviet that the USSR led "in the creation and mass production of intercontinental ballistic rockets of various types."⁵

In this progression of production claims, nothing was said of an operational capability. Marshal Malinovsky, however, addressing the same Congress that heard Khrushchev tell of the organization of serial production of ICBM's, expressed gratitude to the men who had "equipped [*osnastivshim*] the armed forces with a whole series of military ballistic missiles, [including] intercontinental."⁶ This claim was repeated several weeks later, on Army

¹"Control Figures for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1959-1965," *Pravda*, November 14, 1958.

²Speech at a meeting of the Belorussian Supreme Soviet, *Pravda*, January 4, 1959.

³*Pravda*, January 28, 1959 (Italics supplied.)

⁴*Pravda*, November 18, 1959.

⁵*Pravda*, January 15, 1960. (Italics supplied.)

⁶*Kommunist Zvezda*, February 4, 1959.

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Day, by Marshals Moskalenko (later appointed Commander of Rocket Troops) and Chuikov.⁷ Marshal Grechko asserted that the Soviet armed forces had "received" (*poluchili*) the ICBM.⁸ Malinovsky also told the Party Congress something of the characteristics of the Soviet ICBM: It was very powerful, invulnerable, and had pinpoint accuracy. To support his claim of accuracy, made at a time when the Soviet Union had not successfully flight-tested an ICBM for eight months, Malinovsky cited only the success of the Lunik space shot earlier in the month.⁹

Concerning the development of new weapons, Khrushchev told Senator Humphrey in December 1958—privately but doubtless knowing that the U.S. government, and even the public, would be informed of it—that the USSR had developed a new and more powerful ICBM, which had not yet been adequately tested but was to be tested in stages.¹⁰ This may have been the SS-6 ICBM, which was subsequently tested over longer ranges; however, if Khrushchev really had a *new* model ICBM in view, it was the SS-7, which, in accordance with decisions taken during the preceding months, was probably under high-priority development at the end of 1958.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Khrushchev first spoke of the production of Soviet ICBM's just a few days after precipitating the Berlin crisis by his demand, on November 10, 1958, that allied occupation of West Berlin be terminated within a short time. His follow-up statements on ICBM production to the Supreme Soviet were made in January and February 1959, during the period of rising Soviet pressure on the allied governments as they coordinated their responses to this new Soviet challenge. It is significant, however, that apart from the statement of the Soviet marshals about the Soviet Army being "equipped" with ICBM's, no serious effort was made even after the onset of negotiations with the West to claim an operational ICBM capability or to bring it directly to bear against the West in the mounting crisis. Moreover, after Khrushchev's visit to the United States was arranged, in July 1959, he seemed almost to go out of his way to avoid brandishing Soviet military might, including the ICBM. At the same time, Soviet space prowess was demonstrated by two remarkable Lunik shots, one just before Khrushchev's arrival in the United States and one just after he left.

⁷ *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, February 23, 1959, and *Izvestia*, February 22, 1959.

⁸ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 22, 1959.

⁹ Malinovsky's claim was anticipated on January 29 by Werner Von Braun and Homer Stewart of NASA who testified before a Senate subcommittee that U.S. space experts believed the USSR could now "pinpoint" a city in the United States with a ballistic missile fired more than 5000 miles away. They said this appraisal was based largely on the accuracy of the January 2 Lunik shot. (*The New York Times*, January 30, 1959.) Subsequently, President Eisenhower and Secretary of Defense McElroy disputed Malinovsky's claim.

¹⁰ *Life*, January 12, 1959.

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STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

In this period Soviet leaders were apparently setting the stage for subsequent claims of military superiority based on strategic missile forces. For the time being, however, they claimed only a rough equality with the United States. They were quick to dispute Western claims of superiority, especially when such claims were taken to imply a retaliation-proof strategic capability against the Soviet Union. According to Malinovsky, "playing down the effective capacity of the USSR to deal a counterblow to the aggressor and exaggeration of their transoceanic capabilities, especially in the field of strategic ballistic rockets, do not testify to the presence of common sense among the U.S. military."¹¹ That the USSR had "no less force and capabilities" than the United States was asserted by Khrushchev¹² as well as Malinovsky.¹³

Although in this period Soviet leaders for the most part only claimed a strategic capability against the United States when prodded into doing so, Khrushchev in particular frequently seized opportunities to boast of the Soviet capability to destroy the NATO countries in Europe. This was sometimes done even in response to Western statements on the capacity of the United States to destroy the Soviet Union.¹⁴

Khrushchev's unreadiness to claim a large Soviet ICBM capability was strikingly evident on at least two occasions. In responding to Western assertions that NATO's long-range bomber capability conferred strategic superiority over the USSR, Khrushchev sought to nullify this admittedly huge bomber force not by claiming a large Soviet ICBM capability, as he might have done, but rather by asserting that the West's bombers were vulnerable to modern air defenses.¹⁵ Similarly, after quoting Western leaders as saying that the Soviet Union "still has few intercontinental rockets," so that the United States would not be menaced by war, Khrushchev rebutted the conclusion, not by claiming explicitly a large ICBM

¹¹ *Pravda*, April 11, 1959.

¹² *Pravda*, March 19, 1959.

¹³ *Pravda*, April 11, 1959.

¹⁴ At a press conference on March 19, 1959, Khrushchev said:

These bellicose militarists should ponder about their country and its follies. If such a country as ours, which occupies one-sixth of the globe, can, as they assert, be destroyed in a brief period, how much time is needed to destroy other smaller countries, the allies of the United States, by resorting to the same means with which we are threatened? If the American generals and admirals ignore their allies and write them off, it is their own affair. [*Krasnaia Zvezda*, March 20, 1959.]

Also, Khrushchev said in Albania:

If we are attacked we shall try first of all to destroy the rocket bases directed against us. And what does destroying these bases mean? They are located not in bare rocky country, but where people live. But the governments of countries which provide territory for rocket bases of a transoceanic power for some reason do not take the vital interest of their peoples into account. [*Izvestia*, May 29, 1959.]

¹⁵ Interview with West German Social Democratic Party editors, *Izvestia*, May 9, 1959.

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capability to contradict its premise, but rather by implying Soviet possession of other means of attacking the United States. He declared that the United States had "long ago" lost its invulnerability to attack, and said, imprecisely, that the Soviet Union now had "the means to deliver a crushing blow against an aggressor at any point on the earth's surface."¹⁶

CREDIBILITY

Khrushchev's frequent boasts in 1959 of a missile capability to destroy the NATO countries of Europe had some basis in fact. The 700-mile Soviet ballistic missile (Shyster) was operational; the 1100-mile type was intensively tested in 1958 and probably became operational early in 1959.¹⁷

The main ICBM claims Khrushchev sought to make credible were those having to do with production. He relied chiefly on logical progression, and on repetition and verbal reinforcement of the claim. For example, after announcing the organization of serial production in his initial speech to the XXI Congress, Khrushchev simply reaffirmed the statement with emphasis in his concluding speech: "When we say that we have organized the serial production of intercontinental ballistic rockets, it is not just to hear ourselves talk."¹⁸ A week later he said that at first "some leaders of the West automatically expressed doubts, but on second thought promptly stated that if the Russians said so, it means that serial production of missiles [type not specified] has certainly been organized. This is really so."¹⁹ Actually, the claim of serial production, when it was made, was widely accepted in the West, including the intelligence community, even though no successful Soviet ICBM tests were known to have occurred in the preceding nine months. There was some questioning, however, of the precise significance of the term "serial" as used by Khrushchev.

Although Khrushchev's claim that the Soviet ICBM was in serial production did not lend itself to direct demonstration, some measure of support for it was provided indirectly when the USSR expended ICBM vehicles in tests and in space activities. (See the following figure.) Within a few weeks of Khrushchev's announcement, the United States discovered that flight tests of the SS-6 ICBM were being conducted again after an apparent lapse of nine months.²⁰ Before 1959 was over, at least sixteen such tests had occurred.²¹ Although

¹⁶Speech to XXI Party Congress, February 5, 1959.

¹⁷There were at least 50 tests of the 1100-mile ballistic missile in 1958 and 1959, and around 130 firings, primarily for troop training, in the next two years. Most of the present operational capability was realized in 1960-1962.

¹⁸*Pravda*, February 5, 1959.

¹⁹Speech to workers in Ryazan, *Pravda*, February 13, 1959.

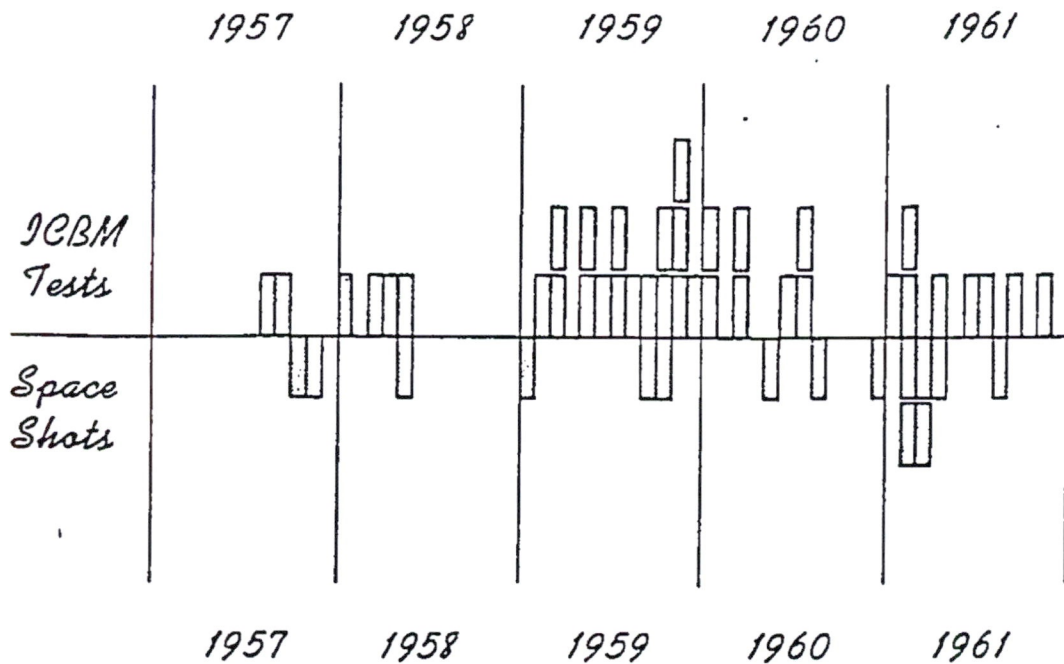
²⁰FTD, TIS-GM-60-2, *Soviet Offensive Guided Missile Capabilities*, February 24, 1960 (Secret), p. 74.

²¹FTD letter, Attachment 2.

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the USSR did not publicly announce any of them,²² the Soviet leaders presumably knew that Western intelligence would learn of the tests. The reason for these tests was simply to further the Soviet ICBM program, but knowledge that a relatively intensive series of ICBM tests was to be conducted during 1959 may have encouraged the hope that the tests would provide a partial and indirect confirmation of Khrushchev's claim that serial production of the ICBM had been organized. In any case, an ICBM flight test occurred within two weeks



Soviet ICBM Test Firings (SS-6) and Space Launches
(Data supplied by Foreign Technology Division, Air Force Systems Command.)

of Khrushchev's reaffirmation that serial production had been organized (February 5, 1959), and two more followed in the next month. There were at least fifteen in the nine months beginning May 1959, compared with nine in the preceding twenty-one months. In addition to sixteen ICBM tests in 1959, there were three space shots (Luniks I, II, and III), making a total of at least nineteen ICBM vehicles expended during 1959. In 1960 at least ten more ICBM vehicles were expended, including three successful space shots, making a minimum

²²A successful Soviet ICBM test was first announced in August 1957, and an impending series of long-range rocket tests was also announced in January 1960. Although their stated objective was to further the Soviet space program, they were actually tests of the SS-6 ICBM.

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of twenty-nine for the two years. Evidently what was initiated in early 1959 was the production-line assembly of ICBM vehicles for research and development and for space activities.

Later in the year Khrushchev sought to dispel doubts expressed in the West regarding the precise meaning of the term "serial production" by speaking of "assembly-line" production, and finally, in January 1960, of "mass production." According to current intelligence estimates, because only a small number of SS-6 missiles was ever deployed, it is clear that production throughout has been principally for purposes of research and development and space boosters. It appears, then, that Khrushchev's claim of serial ICBM production was deliberately misleading; certainly his reference to "mass production" of the ICBM in January was meant to suggest that Soviet ICBM's were being produced in substantial numbers for early deployment.²³ Khrushchev's effort at deception is the more striking because it evidently came after the decision had been taken to deploy only a token force of SS-6 ICBM's. In a sense, Khrushchev's ICBM production claims in 1959, as well as his subsequent claims regarding the Soviet missile capability against the United States, were probably meant to conceal from the West that such a decision had been made, and to provide a fictitious basis for strategic threats against the United States during the extended interval before the follow-on ICBM, the SS-7, was to become operational.

While Khrushchev's 1959 claims were deceptive, the claims of Soviet military leaders in February 1959 that the Soviet armed forces were "equipped" with ICBM's are clearly false insofar as they imply an operational capability. They can be reconciled with available intelligence only after a strained interpretation, namely, that ICBM's had been turned over to the armed forces for test firings. Certainly, the marshals' claims seem designed to create a misleading impression regarding a nonexistent operational capability.

There was a lull in Khrushchev's boasts regarding the Soviet ICBM program in the summer and early fall of 1959, when he was preparing to visit America, and during the visit itself. He himself intimated the reason for this: "I want to go to the U.S. as a man of peace. . . . If during [my talks with the President] I had a rocket sticking out of one pocket and a second out of another . . . what kind of talk would that be?"²⁴ He had apparently resolved not to speak of missiles during his visit, for he observed midway: "I have already

²³ According to an analysis made in CIA in October 1960: "Although Soviet statements as a group clearly imply a transition from the manufacture of individual prototype ICBM's to production of larger numbers, these statements cannot be translated into an absolute volume of output. The statements imply clearly, however, that a progressively greater number of ICBM's are being made available for operational purposes." Again: "Khrushchev's statement about mass production cannot be translated directly into rate of output. The implication that allocations are being made regularly to operational units seems clear." (*Soviet Program for ICBM Production: An Interpretation and Analysis of Official Soviet Statements* (U), CIA/RR #ER #60-33 (Secret), pp. 1, 14.)

²⁴ *Pravda*, August 6, 1959.

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INITIATION OF PRODUCTION CLAIMS

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made many speeches in the U.S. but have not once resorted to the word 'arms,' let alone 'rockets.'²³ But he said this just after anger had led him to break his resolve, and he added: "If I have spoken about it today, you must understand I had no choice." When he spoke of rockets on this occasion, however, it was less to boast of the size and scope of the Soviet ICBM program than to warn of what it might be if the United States rejected peaceful coexistence and maintained the cold war:

If you are not ready for disarmament and want to go on with the arms race, we accept that challenge, for we now have the necessary strength and all the possibilities to create modern weapons, and as for the output of our rockets, these are on the assembly line.²⁴

Khrushchev had asserted this even more forcefully in private to Averell Harriman in June 1959.

In his efforts to intimidate the United States, then, Khrushchev found it useful to suggest two somewhat contradictory theses: that the USSR *was rapidly acquiring* a powerful force that could destroy the United States, and that the USSR *would take steps to acquire* such a force *if* the United States was not more conciliatory. The first of these themes, intended to deceive, was dominant; the second, more in accord with the actual Soviet ICBM program and its potentialities for expansion, was only briefly prominent and was discarded almost as soon as Khrushchev returned to the USSR.

²³ *Pravda*, September 20, 1959.

²⁴ Translation distributed by the Associated Press (see *The New York Times*, September 21, 1959). These words, spoken by Khrushchev extemporaneously at a reception in Los Angeles on September 19, after he had finished reading his prepared text, were softened in the official Soviet version: "If you are not prepared for disarmament and want to continue the arms race, we will have no choice but to go on making rockets, which in our country are being turned out by the assembly-line method." (*World Without Arms, World Without Wars*, Moscow, 1960, Vol. 2, p. 221.)

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III. A LARGE OPERATIONAL ICBM CAPABILITY IS CLAIMED IMPLICITLY: NOVEMBER 1959-APRIL 1960

CHARACTER OF THE CLAIMS

EVEN AFTER HE RETURNED from the United States in October 1959 Khrushchev continued to claim only that the USSR was ahead of all other countries in the *production* of rockets;¹ he said nothing of an ICBM capability-in-being. In an interview earlier in the year, Khrushchev had vaguely asserted, under prodding, that the Soviet Union had "enough rockets for America too, should war be unleashed against us,"² but not until November 1959 did he try to indicate that the USSR possessed a substantial operational ICBM capability: "We now have stockpiled so many rockets, so many atomic and hydrogen warheads, that, if we were attacked, we could wipe from the face of the earth all of our probable opponents." He repeated this statement almost verbatim on December 1, 1959.³ By leaving bombers out of account and making *rockets* the vehicles for this terrible blow, and by talking of "all of our probable opponents," he gave the impression that the vehicles were in fact ICBM's capable of reaching the United States. It is true that Khrushchev did not then or later claim *explicitly* that the United States could be "wiped from the face of the earth" by the Soviet Union; he had often said this explicitly, and was to say it again frequently, of Great Britain, West Germany, France, and other allies of the United States. But on no reasonable interpretation could the United States be *excluded* from the category of the USSR's "probable opponents." The formula employed, however, was imprecise. By straining the meaning of Khrushchev's words, for example, one might suppose that the rockets "now" stockpiled were to supplement bombers previously available. Even this bare possibility, however, like other similar ones, was subsequently eliminated in a new variation of the formula. In January 1960, in his authori-

¹ *Pravda*, October 8, 1959.

² Interview with West German Socialist editors, *Pravda*, May 9, 1959.

³ *Pravda*, November 15 and December 1, 1959.

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tative speech on defense policy to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev advanced a new form of warning:

I stress once again that we already have enough nuclear weapons—atomic and hydrogen—and the corresponding rockets to deliver this weapon to the territory of a possible aggressor. [so] that if some madman stirred up an attack on our state or on other socialist states we could literally wipe from the face of the earth the country or countries that attacked us.¹

This statement reduced the ambiguity of the earlier one in the following ways:

1. The destruction was now to be visited on any *country* that attacked the USSR, instead of on the probable *opponent*, thus eliminating the bare possibility that only the rulers, not the people as a whole, would be destroyed.
2. "Literally" was added to the phrase "wipe from the face of the earth," as though to make the threat of annihilation unequivocal.
3. That the nuclear weapons were to be delivered on target by rockets, not bombers, was now made unequivocal.

An important ambiguity that remained arose from the retention of the term *rockets*. Khrushchev presumably meant to indicate land-based rockets, because he made no mention of either bombers or submarines from which the rockets might be launched. He had not previously claimed an air-to-surface missile (ASM) capability, and after 1958 he had dropped his earlier references to a submarine-launched missile capability. In any case, the ASM for strategic bombing did not become available until 1961,² and Soviet capabilities for striking strategic targets with submarine-launched missiles are believed to have been quite small at that time.

The only land-based Soviet rockets at that time, however, were in the USSR; to reach the continental United States would require ICBM's. Thus, in asserting that the USSR had sufficient rockets to wipe from the face of the earth the countries that might attack the USSR, Khrushchev implicitly claimed a not inconsiderable operational ICBM force. This claim was repeated to the Supreme Soviet by the Minister of Defense, Marshal Malinovsky. Subsequently, it was quoted by several other Soviet military leaders, including the head of the Warsaw Pact forces, Marshal Grechko.³

Despite Khrushchev's implied claim of a sizable operational ICBM force, and the statement of the marshals that the Soviet armed forces had been "equipped" with ICBM's, nowhere in this speech did Khrushchev state explicitly that the Soviet ICBM had been deployed, or was operational. In his only explicit statement regarding the ICBM, however, Khrushchev

¹Pravda, January 15, 1960.

²The AS-3, with an approximate range of 350 nautical miles, then became available.

³Pravda, May 9, 1961. Grechko added, in his own words: Soviet "rocket troops now [are] able to destroy the aggressor at any point on earth."

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asserted that the USSR led in the mass production of "ICBM's of various types," which, as noted above, clearly implied production for operational use.⁷ At the same time Khrushchev asserted that "strategic" rockets were being deployed, evidently in large numbers. In Soviet terminology, strategic rockets have a range of 1000 kilometers or more. He indicated that they were being protected by camouflage and secrecy, but he said nothing of hardening the rocket bases. Although the "strategic" rockets being deployed might have comprised ICBM's, this did not necessarily follow from Khrushchev's remarks. His statements about the deployment of Soviet "strategic rockets" were made in the context of the threat posed by U.S. military bases surrounding the USSR.

Although his previous ICBM claims had formed a logical and gradual progression, in January 1960 Khrushchev jumped from the assertion that the ICBM was being serially produced to the claim that the USSR had the necessary rockets to wipe any hostile country from the earth, without ever having said explicitly that the ICBM was being deployed.

Shortly after Khrushchev's speech, Moscow announced the successful testing over a distance of 6500 nautical miles of a rocket ostensibly designed to further the Soviet space program, although its military significance was made clear.⁸ These tests seem to confirm Khrushchev's remarks to Senator Humphrey in December 1958 regarding the Soviet Union's capacity to extend greatly the range of its ICBM. The first rocket was said to have hit within 2 kilometers of its aiming point, and this report provided the first numerical claim as to the accuracy of the Soviet ICBM.⁹

After January 1960, when Khrushchev voiced his extreme rocket claim for the third time in two months, he did not repeat it again. In general, Soviet rocket claims after that time do not seem to reflect a large and growing force of operational ICBM's. In actual fact there was no increase in the Soviet operational ICBM force beyond the small 1960 force of SS-6's until 1962, when the SS-7 ICBM became operational.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

The implied claim of a rocket capability to wipe the United States from the face of the earth was first made several weeks after Khrushchev's return from the United States. As

⁷This reference to "various types" is unique in Khrushchev's claims: If *types* here means *models* (for example, distinct models of the SS-6 ICBM), the statement is misleading; if it really means distinct types (for example, SS-6 and SS-7), then the claim must be false, because the SS-7 was not even flight-tested successfully for more than a year, and "mass production" clearly implies output for operational purposes. (See p. 16.)

⁸In an address to the Indian Parliament, Khrushchev stated that "quite recently [January 1960] we successfully tested powerful intercontinental ballistic rockets which demonstrated new great achievements of Soviet scientists." (TASS, February 11, 1960.)

⁹*Pravda*, January 22, 1960. Subsequently, TASS said of the first test in the fall of 1961, Pacific series, that the rocket hit within one kilometer of the target. (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 15, 1961.)

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a result of his talks with President Eisenhower at Camp David, Khrushchev was assured of a summit meeting, to be held in the spring of 1960, and had agreed not to press for an immediate settlement of the Berlin issue in return for the President's acknowledgment that the issue could not be indefinitely postponed. The situation, then, was one in which Khrushchev had achieved a proximate aim, the summit conference—at which the Berlin issue, among others, was to be discussed—at the cost of some easing of Soviet pressure on West Berlin. Although the timing of the rocket claim does not seem to have been determined by Khrushchev's tactics on Berlin (it was not repeated in the months immediately preceding the conference), it was probably meant to reinforce the menace of Soviet ICBM's in the event of negotiations on Berlin.

On the other hand, the rocket claim coincides with the announcement of new measures that would radically alter the Soviet military posture. Military personnel were to be reduced by one-third, to a total of 2.4 million men, within two years. This was made possible, according to Khrushchev, by the rocket-nuclear weapons in the Soviet armed forces, which vastly increased their fire power. The inclusion of Khrushchev's claim of a rocket capability to destroy the United States in the same speech that announced a substantial troop cut probably was meant both to reassure the Soviet nation, and especially the armed forces, and to deter the West from trying to capitalize on the reduction of Soviet troop strength. The object of this rocket claim will have to be considered further when its credibility is discussed below.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Khrushchev's claim of a rocket capability to destroy the United States led within a month to a new assessment of the military balance. In his address to the Indian Parliament on February 12, 1960, he proclaimed the USSR the strongest military power in the world. This thesis, like the rocket claim, was subscribed to shortly afterward by top military officials in articles and speeches on Army Day, and it was often repeated thereafter.

Khrushchev had already presented the balance of strategic weapons as one in which the USSR had not merely forged ahead but had brought about a confrontation of two distinct strategic weapon systems, the bomber and the missile.¹⁰ He frequently depreciated the U.S. space program and even told the Economic Club in New York: "We created the ballistic intercontinental rocket, which, in fact, you do not possess to this day."¹¹ His denial that the

¹⁰He told the Supreme Soviet: "We are several years ahead of other countries in the development and mass production of ICBM's of various types"; and later: "The USA has set itself the task of overtaking the USSR in rocket production in the course of five years" (*Pravda*, January 15, 1960). At the present pace of weapons development, an interval of several years can produce a new generation of weapons.

¹¹*Pravda*, September 19, 1959.

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United States possessed an ICBM was made almost a year after the United States had successfully tested the Atlas at full range, and several months before the Soviet SS-6 was so tested. Moreover, the denial roughly coincided with the Air Force's public claim that the Atlas was now operational. Khrushchev frequently called attention to American reliance on manned bombers, and emphasized that the USSR had cut back production of bombers and might stop producing them in the future. In fact, in his military claims from mid-1958 to mid-1961, Khrushchev rarely referred to the Soviet manned-bomber capability. The effect of these distinctions and reticences was to depict a strategic balance in which U.S. bombers were opposed by Soviet ICBM's.

The Soviet leaders alluded to a possible implication for Soviet military strategy of this new assessment of the military balance. In the revised formulation of the threat that Soviet rockets could be used to wipe all possible enemies from the face of the earth (January 14, 1960), the condition was no longer "if we were attacked," as in the previous warning, but in the event of "an attack on our state or on other socialist states" (*italics supplied*). This suggested that the Soviet rocket strike need not be preceded by an attack on the Soviet Union itself. The effect of the change was to hint at the possibility of a Soviet first strike against the United States, an implication absent from the earlier formula.

CREDIBILITY

The assertion in early 1960 that the USSR had sufficient rockets to destroy the United States is, in its implications, the most far-reaching Soviet claim. Although expressed metaphorically, it extended previous claims so as to include the United States, was twice repeated, and was the culmination of a sequence of ICBM claims. Had the claim been substantially justified, it would have meant that by 1962 the USSR could have had, with a moderate effort, a far greater ICBM capability than it is now believed to possess. Were the claim, however, to be revealed as a baseless lie, and not simply an exaggeration, the Soviet political and military leaders would be caught in a large deception, one so extreme that the credibility of their pronouncements on Soviet military capabilities might be seriously impaired.

To evaluate this claim we must first try to determine its meaning and this involves an attempt to translate a metaphor into physical quantities. What level of destruction is implied by the phrase, "literally wipe from the face of the earth," when applied to a country like the United States? How many nuclear weapons of what yield must be delivered to which targets? How many ICBM's of the type available to the USSR in early 1960 would have been needed to deliver these weapons, taking into account the factor of reliability and the problem of accuracy? How great an operational ICBM force is required for such a capability

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as Khrushchev and the top Soviet marshals claimed? If the claim was actually based on quantitative calculations, it should be possible *in principle* for us to duplicate them and thus to arrive at the minimum operational ICBM force that the claim implies. An effort by one of the authors to perform this operation, making considerable allowance for political bias in the presumed Soviet calculation, arrived at a minimum figure of eighty ICBM's.¹² Perhaps by making still greater allowances for political bias and exaggeration in the original calculation, one could further reduce this figure. But to reduce it to the point where it might be reconciled with the maximum number of operational ICBM's that the Soviet armed forces had in January 1960, or at any time throughout that year, according to the intelligence now available, would require so much allowance for political exaggeration as to deprive the claim of any significant basis in numerical calculations.

Even if it is supposed that the claim was not based on precise numerical calculations, this does not mean that it was asserted without deliberation or without understanding of where the Soviet ICBM program then stood. The claim was the product, albeit the *fabricated* product, of informed reflection. Khrushchev asserted it three times: twice in an equivocal formulation whose precise meaning seems deliberately obscured; and finally in a major address on defense policy to the Supreme Soviet, when a number of ambiguities in the earlier formulation were resolved, no doubt deliberately. Moreover, it was repeated by top military leaders, including Defense Minister Malinovsky, who were certainly informed and presumably had reflected on what they were saying.

The intelligence community now seems agreed with much greater confidence than it had at the time that the number of operational ICBM's that were available to the USSR in January 1960 was at most an IOC of ten missiles; moreover, in contrast with the then current estimates of the future deployment of the SS-6, it is now confidently believed that there was no subsequent increase in the SS-6 force beyond token strength. Even assuming that this entire force could successfully impact 5-megaton warheads on an optimum target system in the United States in a retaliatory or pre-emptive attack, the gap between the level of damage such an attack could inflict and the level implied in the phrase "literally wipe from the face of the earth" cannot reasonably be bridged.¹³ Moreover, it has been questioned whether even a token force of SS-6 ICBM's was actually operational as early as January 1960. At worst, then, the USSR had no operational ICBM's when Khrushchev boasted of

¹²Myron Rush, *Khrushchev on Current Soviet ICBM Capabilities* (U), The RAND Corporation, RM-2555, March 15, 1960 (Secret).

¹³Some notion of what Khrushchev meant to convey in the expression, "literally wipe from the face of the earth," may be indicated by an earlier "country-busting" claim by the Soviet Premier in regard to West Germany. During an interview with West German Social Democratic newspaper editors in May 1959, Khrushchev asked: "How many bombs with yields of from 3 to 5 megatons would have to be exploded over West Germany in order to put it out of commission?" One of the editors suggested eight, to which Khrushchev replied: "Evidently, not more." (*Pravda*,

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DECEPTION IN SOVIET STRATEGIC MISSILE CLAIMS

the Soviet capacity to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth; at best, it had a token force of no more than ten. Moreover, Khrushchev could not have been anticipating the acquisition of a substantial force in the near future, because he knew this would have to await the deployment of the SS-7 missile. In any case, it is necessary to conclude that the claim was grossly misleading, so much so that the exaggeration it contained could not possibly be the result of miscalculation.

Now it is necessary to ask, Could Khrushchev really have believed that the January 14, 1960, claim would influence U.S. beliefs about the military balance? It may be useful to recapitulate here the basis in fact for Khrushchev's deception in his speech of January 14, 1960. Assembly-line production of research and development models of the SS-6 was probably initiated in early 1959 on the basis of decisions taken about a year earlier. After a period of relatively slow progress in the last half of 1958, successful flight tests of the SS-6 were resumed in February 1959 and were conducted every month except April, for a total of sixteen in 1959. It was probably supposed that these tests, together with the successful flight test of the improved ablation re-entry vehicle in December 1959, were observed by Western intelligence. Khrushchev may have believed in January 1960 that the West credited the USSR with possessing a substantial *inventory* of a developed and technically qualified ICBM, and this may have encouraged him to try to deceive the West regarding the *deployment* of this missile. Soviet leaders on several occasions have publicly questioned the ability of the United States to judge their operational ICBM capabilities.

In mid-1959, several months after military leaders announced that the Soviet armed forces had been supplied with ICBM's, Khrushchev said:

Certain American generals and admirals... allege that the Soviet Union has few intercontinental rockets... [They actually had no operational ICBM's at that time.] But this, after all, is what the American military men assert. It should be said, however, that it is always better to count the money in your own pocket than that in the other fellow's. I might say, incidentally, that we have enough rockets for America too, should war be unleashed against us...¹⁴

Khrushchev's confidence that the United States was uncertain about its estimates of the Soviet ICBM capability may have been enhanced during his visit to this country, when he

May 9, 1959.) Employing Khrushchev's standards, it is clear that ten such warheads delivered by ICBM's could not inflict the same level of destruction on the United States that eight bombs could inflict on the Federal Republic.

Marshal Malinovsky, in his January 1960 speech to the Supreme Soviet, explicitly referred to calculations of this type made by "both our own and foreign specialists." In an illustrative calculation, he used as a unit of measure a bomb with a yield of only 2 megatons, but made the calculation for a state with a territory far smaller than that of the United States (350,000-500,000 square kilometers). Malinovsky concluded that if one hundred 2-megaton bombs were exploded over such a state the resulting blast damage and lethal radioactivity would transform it into "a lifeless desert." (*Pravda*, January 15, 1960.)

¹⁴*Izvestia*, May 5, 1959.

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received acknowledgments of respect for Soviet rocket capabilities on the basis of demonstrated Soviet achievements in space.¹⁵ Moreover, the expressed official U.S. estimate of the Soviet ICBM program was criticized in some military and political circles, and by journalists, as being too conservative. This was especially true of the estimated size of the Soviet operational ICBM force in future years, but the official estimate of the existing force was also criticized as being too low. (It was publicly acknowledged in February 1960 that parts of the intelligence community had registered dissents from the national intelligence estimates.¹⁶) This controversy, which was partly conducted in public, accentuated the note of uncertainty in the U.S. estimates. Official U.S. policies sometimes had a similar effect. On December 1, 1959, Defense Secretary McElroy disclosed plans for a possible airborne alert, with nuclear-armed bombers continuously in the air, to make up for any future missile gap that might arise.¹⁷ This manifest concern that the USSR might rapidly deploy a large ICBM force and thus achieve a first-strike capability may have encouraged Khrushchev to imply that the USSR already possessed a missile capability to wipe the United States from the face of the earth.

Whatever its uncertainty about the future, however, the administration, basing itself on current intelligence estimates, then credited the USSR with only a small operational ICBM capability. According to McElroy (December 1, 1959), both the United States and the USSR had about ten combat-ready ICBM's. A discrepancy having appeared between what the USSR claimed and what the United States publicly conceded, the Soviet military newspaper, *Red Star* (*Krasnaya Zvezda*), hastened to defend the Soviet position:

We declare openly that the "data" at the disposal of A. Dulles are of little interest to us. To calculate in Washington the number of rockets and other types of Soviet arms is of as little use as counting crows on the fence. Why does the master director bother at all? We are prepared to answer his question. How many rockets do we have? Enough! Enough to wipe from the face of the earth any country which dares attack the Soviet Union. N. S. Khrushchev frankly and openly declared this at the January session of the USSR Supreme Soviet.¹⁸

Were these assertions of confidence that the United States could not learn the size of the Soviet ICBM force real or feigned? Could this confidence have survived the Soviet leaders' awareness of the U-2 flights? Subsequently, as we shall see, Khrushchev intimated that the U-2's had not flown over areas where the ICBM was deployed.

¹⁵Khrushchev remarked, for example: "When I was in the U.S., American leaders told me: 'Yes, we have now become convinced that you can deliver freight to any point on earth.'" (*Pravda*, October 10, 1959.)

¹⁶United States Senate, 86th Congress, *Hearings before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, in Conjunction with the Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, on Missiles, Space, and Other Major Defense Matters*, February 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, and March 16, 1960, *passim*, especially pp. 114-121. (Hereafter cited as *Hearings*.)

¹⁷Some weeks later, in his budget message (January 18, 1960), President Eisenhower rejected this proposal, but authorized the acquisition of a standby alert capability for heavy bombers.

¹⁸*Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 31, 1960.

Another means employed to heighten U.S. uncertainty in estimating Soviet ICBM capabilities was the assertion by both Khrushchev and Malinovsky that Soviet ballistic missile sites could readily be concealed, thereby implying that the West had failed to discover the ICBM sites because of the success of Soviet concealment measures. Speaking of ballistic rockets, including those of great range, Marshal Malinovsky observed:

The building of large, expensive airfields with complicated equipment is not required for launching rockets. It is far easier to camouflage and even completely conceal rocket-launch positions; this guarantees a higher degree of security and invulnerability for rocket weapons.¹⁹

Khrushchev also spoke of Soviet ability to conceal the launching sites of *strategic* rockets (that is, rockets having a range of more than 1000 kilometers). He was probably intentionally vague as to whether ICBM's were to be included in that category. He observed that Soviet territory was immense, so that "we have the possibility of dispersing rocket facilities, of camouflaging them well."²⁰ Of course, to have "the possibility" of doing something does not mean that it has been done. Moreover, as far as ICBM's were concerned, the territory available for deployment in this period may not really have been so vast. Not until January 1960, a few days after Khrushchev made his rocket claims, did the USSR test the SS-6 ICBM at full range, 6500 nautical miles, employing the improved ablation-type nose cone. These full-range tests may have had the subsidiary purpose of demonstrating what Khrushchev had just intimated: that the Soviet ICBM could be deployed anywhere in the USSR and still reach the necessary targets in the United States.²¹ It was not until March 1962, when he announced the creation by Soviet scientists of a new "global" rocket, that Khrushchev claimed explicitly that ICBM's could be deployed anywhere on Soviet territory and still reach the necessary targets.

It appears, however, that the Soviet leaders believed in 1960 that uncertainty within the U.S. government regarding the deployment of the SS-6 was substantial and could be increased by misleading statements about the location and concealment of Soviet rocket sites, and by deceptive claims of a large missile capability against the United States. It seems clear that an important object of Khrushchev's 1960 claim of a rocket capability to wipe hostile countries from the face of the earth was to conceal the Soviet decision to deploy only a handful of ICBM's until the SS-7 became operational (1962).

Important implications, affecting Soviet domestic politics and the politics of the communist camp, follow from this conclusion. The rocket claim, for example, served as the chief

¹⁹ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The first known test of the improved re-entry vehicle, which enabled the Soviet ICBM to be fired to a far greater distance than previously, occurred in December 1959.

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justification for the projected one-third reduction in the Soviet armed forces. A policy of deception on such a scale must have raised a serious problem with widespread ramifications in the Soviet military establishment. The top Soviet commanders, at least, could not readily be deceived in matters affecting the strength of Soviet strategic forces. Obviously, they must have been privy to the deception. Several of them evidently connived in Khrushchev's policy, including the Defense Minister Malinovsky and Marshal Moskalenko, later commander of strategic rocket troops.²² Others among the top commanders, perhaps also aware of the deception involved, may have resisted the troop cut, for several were removed from their posts in the following months.²³

In its final form, as noted above, Khrushchev's rocket claim referred to "an attack on our state or on other socialist states," thereby extending the Soviet nuclear umbrella over the other countries of the communist camp. Although Soviet leaders were doubtless confident that the USSR would not soon be called on to employ its newly asserted rocket capability on behalf of its allies, the assertion was not devoid of risks.²⁴ Chinese communist leaders, already at odds with their Soviet comrades on questions of foreign and military policy, might have been emboldened to exploit Khrushchev's claims politically against the West in ways that could prove dangerous, were they not told the truth about Soviet strategic forces; on the other hand, if Khrushchev undeceived them, they could use the information to embarrass him in the political hostilities that were already dividing the communist bloc. One of the most crucial, and obscure, aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute involves the CPR leaders' beliefs in recent years regarding Soviet ICBM capabilities. If they believed that Khrushchev was telling the truth in January 1960 about Soviet rocket capabilities, this must have fed their resentment at his relatively cautious foreign policy, particularly at his refusal to assume risks on their behalf. The consequences must have been equally disruptive of the Sino-Soviet alliance, perhaps more so, if the CPR leaders understood that Khrushchev was greatly exaggerating the progress of the Soviet ICBM program, while in fact retarding it by diverting funds to the satisfaction of consumer demands and to the assistance of "bourgeois nationalist" regimes in Africa and Asia.

²²In subscribing to Khrushchev's claim, however, Moskalenko significantly altered it so that "the Soviet armed forces," rather than simply its nuclear-missile forces, were credited with the capability of wiping any country from the face of the earth. (*Izvestia*, January 16, 1960.) Malinovsky did not subscribe to Khrushchev's claim in his speech to the Supreme Soviet, although he affirmed it in a speech delivered a few days later. (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 20, 1960.)

²³Konev gave up his post as head of the Warsaw Pact military forces and Sokolovsky resigned as Chief of the General Staff. Neither man was reassigned, although Konev later received an important post as Commander of Soviet Forces in East Germany after the troop cut was rescinded. In an article published a month after Khrushchev's defense policy speech to the Supreme Soviet, Konev seemed to stress Soviet superiority in technology and overall military strength rather than in operational strategic rockets. (*Sovetskaya Rossiya*, February 23, 1960.)

²⁴Malinovsky cautiously amended Khrushchev's formula to read, "an attack on our state and on other socialist countries." (Italics supplied.) Thereby he seemed to imply that only an attack on the USSR would bring about a Soviet attack on the United States.

Khrushchev's magnification of the Soviet ICBM capability contrasts with his belittlement of the Soviet bomber capability. He revealed that the Soviet Union had reduced its production of bombers and forecast that bomber production would continue to decline and might even cease.²² In part, as noted above, this is readily explicable in terms of his political objectives. He sought to make it appear that in strategic weapons the USSR was a full generation ahead of the United States, which relied on bombers that were vulnerable and hence obsolete. Yet the effect of these statements was to reinforce the West's confidence that the growth of the Soviet heavy bomber capability against the United States had been slow, and to downgrade future Soviet heavy bomber capabilities.²³

These tactics are not so paradoxical as they may appear. The Soviet bomber capability against the United States in January 1960, while not insignificant, was greatly inferior to the SAC bomber force and the growing U.S. missile capability. Since the Soviet heavy bomber force could be estimated with some confidence, it did not lend itself to exaggerated claims.²⁴ This was not true, however, of the Soviet ICBM force; the U.S. intelligence community allowed a margin of uncertainty in estimating the Soviet ICBM program. The Soviet leaders evidently saw an opportunity to exploit this uncertainty at a time when the U.S. preponderance in strategic forces was reaching a new peak.

Khrushchev's January 1960 claim of a missile capability to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth was the extreme instance of a series of deceptive claims that were designed to serve several distinct aims of Soviet foreign policy:

1. They were designed to help conceal from Western governments the 1958 decision to deploy only a token force of SS-6 ICBM's in the next few years. In view of the Soviet capacity for secrecy, this was feasible, and in fact the undertaking was probably substantially successful until the second half of 1961. Although there was considerable disagreement within the U.S. intelligence community regarding the size of the first-generation ICBM force that the USSR would acquire as well as the pace of the build-up, it was assumed by all parties that an SS-6 force substantially exceeding token strength would be deployed.

2. The deceptive claims were meant to help deter a U.S. attack on the USSR by raising doubts in the minds of U.S. leaders as to the superiority of American strategic forces.

²² *Pravda*, January 15, 1960. "Almost the entire military air force is being replaced by rocket equipment. We have by now sharply cut, and it seems will continue sharply to cut and even discontinue the manufacture of bombers and other obsolete equipment. . . ."

²³ Related to this question of Khrushchev's declaratory policy is the prior question as to why larger numbers of the Soviet heavy bomber, which could reach the United States from Soviet air bases, were not made operational in the years 1955-1960, when there was no immediate prospect of achieving a substantial ICBM capability, nor even a large and accelerated program to deploy the ICBM. This question, however, lies beyond the scope of this report.

²⁴ In fact, relatively little effort was made to exaggerate this capability after 1955, when impressive numbers of heavy jet bombers were displayed on May Day.

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Although the extreme missile claim of January 1960 was not credited by U.S. intelligence at the time, it may have helped to strengthen beliefs that the USSR intended to deploy a substantial ICBM force and would soon acquire it.

3. The claimed missile capability to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth was particularly suitable for the political use that Soviet leaders have made of their strategic forces. Since its inception, the Soviet space program had brought about a reduction in the use of strategic threats against the USSR, a point on which Soviet leaders have shown marked sensitivity.²⁹ On a number of occasions, as in his interview with Averell Harriman in June 1959, Khrushchev has countered U.S. strategic threats, explicit or so interpreted by him, by invoking the specter of Soviet ICBM's. One object of the series of missile claims was probably to put the United States on the defensive in the duel of strategic threats, and was perhaps not without success.³⁰ Even after it was publicly revealed early in 1960 that U.S. national intelligence estimates of the projected size and pace of Soviet ICBM deployment had been scaled down—that the USSR was not engaging in a "crash" program³¹—administration leaders conceded that the Soviet Union might "enjoy at times a moderate numerical superiority during the next 3 years," with the peak probably occurring in 1962 (Secretary Gates).³² The fierce public debate over the extent of projected Soviet ICBM superiority tended to obscure the fact of current U.S. strategic superiority and to lessen its political value.

If, as it now appears, Soviet leaders made exaggerated rocket claims in early 1960, their object was probably not so much to force concessions from the West in a direct confrontation on some crucial issue (for example, allied occupation rights in West Berlin) as to deter the West from the political or military exploitation of its superior strategic power and to provide a promising environment for offensive political moves when there appeared to be small risk in doing so. Certainly, Soviet military leaders would be more willing to exaggerate Soviet ICBM capabilities to conceal weakness than in an effort to bluff a superior opponent in a coming confrontation. The circumstances in which the exaggeration was publicized may have seemed to mitigate its danger. Khrushchev had just returned from his visit to America, having arranged for a future summit meeting. International tension had declined considerably from the high point of early 1959, and there appeared to be no reason for a new precipi-

²⁹A comprehensive and detailed study of U.S. military claims in recent years has yet to be made. One has the impression, however, that responsible U.S. officials tempered their claims of strategic superiority after Sputnik, stressing the capability to cause great retaliatory damage to the USSR in the event the United States was attacked, rather than the capability to destroy the USSR if it attacked a U.S. ally.

³⁰Secretary McNamara was later to say that the ending of the myth of the missile gap "has made it possible to take a firm line with our adversaries and at the same time to reassure our friends that we are strong and determined to use our strength if we have to." (*Saturday Evening Post*, December 1, 1962, p. 18.)

³¹*Hearings*, p. 112.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 457.

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DECEPTION IN SOVIET STRATEGIC MISSILE CLAIMS

tate rise, unless the Soviet leaders embarked on some dangerous course of action. In view of subsequent developments, it appears that this was not their intention.

To conclude, the military leaders may have been induced to exaggerate Soviet rocket capabilities against the United States in 1960 because they were aware of Soviet inferiority in strategic forces and, at the same time, had received Khrushchev's assurances that Soviet foreign policy was a cautious one and that political retreats would be executed when this appeared necessary to reduce the danger of a military clash with the United States.

The credit accorded in the United States to the deceptive Soviet missile claims varied from group to group. Even in the most knowledgeable group, the U.S. intelligence community, there was considerable uncertainty regarding the Soviet ICBM program. As Secretary McNamara later stated, the expectation that the USSR would achieve superiority over the United States in missiles was a myth that resulted from "incomplete intelligence; although it was created by intelligence analysts acting in good faith, it was a myth all the same."²² Although there was no question of accepting the Soviet ICBM claims at face value just because they could not be disproved by available intelligence, neither could they be entirely ignored, particularly when they seemed plausible in the light of what was then known about the Soviet ICBM program and of beliefs about Soviet ICBM requirements. Even claims that the United States rejected were not necessarily without effect; if it was thought that they might become valid in the near future, they tended to heighten the pervasive uncertainty that surrounded intelligence estimates of the Soviet ICBM program, especially as regards the upper limits of the projected Soviet capability.

Against the background of impressive and dramatic Soviet space successes, the effect produced by Soviet ICBM claims on political leaders, journalists, and other public-opinion molders both in the United States and in allied countries, who did not have access to classified information, was more direct and pronounced. Public uneasiness in the United States, coupled with uncertainty in the intelligence estimates of the Soviet ICBM program, impelled the administration to intensify and accelerate the U.S. military effort to ensure that the programmed American strategic forces would be adequate for deterrence in an uncertain future environment.²³ As a result, the strategic imbalance that the exaggerated Soviet claims had been designed to obscure was in time further enlarged. Moreover, when the extent of the Soviet deception was finally exposed, the credibility of Soviet strategic claims was put in question. A key asset that Khrushchev had nurtured, at substantial cost, through the impressive Soviet space program was thereby in some measure dissipated.

²² *Saturday Evening Post*, December 1, 1962, p. 18.

²³ General Schriever has stated that pressure generated by the anticipated missile gap "helped to develop our missiles a lot sooner than otherwise might have been the case." (*Air Force and Space Digest*, November 1962, p. 78.)

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Thus, the exaggeration of Soviet ICBM capabilities, although it may have recommended itself to Soviet leaders as an easy means to boost the political benefits arising from the spectacular Soviet space successes, exacted a price that may in the long run outweigh whatever temporary political advantages they secured.

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IV. THE U-2 AFFAIR AND ITS AFTERMATH: MAY-AUGUST 1960

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS in the late spring and early summer of 1960 were dominated by the U-2 incident, the collapse of the Paris summit meeting, and the heightened tension in East-West relations associated with these events. The political context was one in which the Soviet leaders might have been expected to repeat the extreme claims regarding Soviet strategic offense capabilities that they had asserted only a few months earlier, in the more relaxed atmosphere of the post-Camp David period. But despite the grave provocation that Khrushchev said had been offered by the United States, and despite his acknowledgment that the revelation of past U-2 overflights had been interpreted in some quarters as a sign of Soviet weakness, he and the other Soviet leaders were discriminating, if not always truthful, in the military claims they now put forward.

Their new claims were strongly conditioned by the U-2 incident and the questions it raised regarding (a) the USSR's past as well as future air defense capabilities; (b) its ability to keep secret the location of its strategic missile bases; and (c) the vulnerability of these bases, were their locations to be known. Although new and categorical claims were made concerning these aspects of the Soviet defensive posture, the Soviet leadership displayed a marked restraint in making new claims for their strategic offense capabilities, and even in reiterating the most extreme of their old ones.

Soviet caution was most pronounced in the days following Khrushchev's May 5 announcement in the Supreme Soviet that a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft had been brought down on Soviet territory. The Soviet Premier took pains to deny that the Soviet government regarded the U-2 incursion as a precursor of war. While he sought to derive maximum political and propaganda advantage from the incident, he reiterated his intention to proceed to the Paris summit meeting as planned. And he told the Supreme Soviet on May 7 that the incident "must not compel us to revise our plans by increasing appropriations for weapons and for the army, must not compel us to halt the process of reducing the army."¹

¹ *Pravda*, May 8, 1960.

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In the wake of the U-2 incident, Khrushchev's references to Soviet strategic rocket capabilities fell far short of his extreme claims of late 1959 and early 1960. He seemed more concerned to emphasize the readiness of the Soviet strategic rocket force than its size or capabilities. Thus, on May 5 he stated that although the Soviet Union, unlike the United States, had no bombers on alert, "we have rockets on alert, which will hit accurately and inevitably their assigned target and will work better and more reliably than aircraft on alert."² That this alert rocket force included some ICBM's was implied by Khrushchev in his press conference at the U-2 exhibit several days later, when he said that Soviet rockets would explode on U.S. territory "in the very first minutes of a war," if the United States were to unleash one.³

On May 7 Khrushchev announced that a Main Command of Rocket Troops had been established under Marshal Nedelin, an organizational move said to flow from the conversion of the Soviet armed forces to rocket weapons.⁴ Although the announcement was presumably intended to convey the impression that recent progress warranted the creation of a separate command for rocket troops, what Khrushchev said explicitly—"the Soviet Army and Navy are being converted to rocket weapons"—was merely a repetition of what he had announced four months earlier from the same rostrum.⁵

Following the abortive summit meeting, Khrushchev indicated satisfaction with the state of Soviet missile production by announcing that the USSR had already ceased the production of "certain types of rockets and put the brakes on the manufacture of certain other types." Rockets, he observed, "are not cucumbers, you know—you don't eat them—and more than a certain number are not required to repel aggression."⁶ Khrushchev had anticipated this announcement a year earlier, when he stated that "perhaps it will not be long before we will begin to curtail the production of rockets." On that occasion he said that rockets could not be stored "like cucumbers"; they were "delicate things" and needed "constant maintenance."⁷ On neither occasion did Khrushchev specify the types of rockets involved, and it is probable that by May 1960 the production of certain types of tactical or surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) had in fact been terminated or curtailed. But the 1960 announcement, coming immediately after a reference to Soviet ICBM and MRBM capabilities, evidently was meant to convey the impression that production of strategic rockets was being curtailed.

It was in the above-mentioned reference to Soviet MRBM's that Khrushchev claimed for the first time to possess missiles in the 2000-mile-range class: "In the event of aggression,

² *Pravda*, May 6, 1960.

³ *Pravda*, May 12, 1960.

⁴ *Pravda*, May 8, 1960.

⁵ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

⁶ *Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

⁷ *Pravda*, May 12, 1959.

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we really will deliver a blow at the American bases in those countries where they are located. Rockets with ranges of 2,000 to 4,000 kilometers may be used for this." U.S. intelligence at that time did not credit the USSR with an MRBM capable of reaching targets beyond the range of 1100 nautical miles, nor was any such missile then known to be under development. Khrushchev's claim turned out to be valid, although, as was often the case, somewhat premature. The first firing of the Soviet 2000-nautical-mile missile (SS-5) came on June 6, 1960, eight days after Khrushchev's claim, and it is estimated that an IOC was not achieved until late 1961 or early 1962.⁹ This claim, which so quickly received partial verification, may have enhanced Khrushchev's reputation for credibility in weapons pronouncements.

It was only after the extraordinary tension raised by the U-2 affair and the summit collapse had dissipated that Soviet leaders again began to make flat assertions of Soviet missile superiority, though still avoiding the most extreme claims of the pre-U-2 period. In July Khrushchev spoke once more of the "undoubted" superiority of the USSR in modern means of nuclear weapon delivery.¹⁰ Mikoyan termed this superiority "vast."¹¹ During his visit to Austria that month, Khrushchev reaffirmed that, militarily, the Soviet Union was the world's most powerful country.¹² This categorical claim, first voiced by Khrushchev at the beginning of his Indian trip in February 1960 and reiterated frequently by him and by other Soviet leaders, had last been made on March 4, by Khrushchev in Kabul.

Three new claims of the period May-August 1960 related directly to the U-2 incident and were designed to offset its negative strategic implications. One of these claims pertained to the target intelligence on Soviet missile bases that the United States might have acquired through the U-2 operation and, by implication, to the credibility of past Soviet missile claims.

In his numerous speeches and press conferences in the first seven weeks after the downing of Powers' U-2 near Sverdlovsk, Khrushchev avoided these crucial questions, though he stated that missile bases were among the U-2 intelligence targets. During his Supreme Soviet speech on May 7, he displayed some of the prints allegedly made from film recovered from Powers' aircraft and said they included photographs of airfields, petrol stores, and industrial enterprises; he said nothing of rocket bases. It was not until June 21, when he spoke at the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in Bucharest, that Khrushchev attempted

⁹ *Pravda*, May 29, 1960. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁰ TIS-MS-61-4, *Soviet Offensive Missile Capabilities*, October 16, 1961 (Secret). The first firing was to a distance of only 1000 nautical miles. Full-range firings began several months later.

¹¹ TV and radio speech, Vienna, July 7, 1960.

¹² Press conference in Oslo, June 29, 1960, in FBIS, *Survey of Communist Bloc Broadcasts* (June 29-July 12), July 14, 1960 (Confidential), p. 8.

¹³ TV and radio speech, Vienna, July 7, 1960.

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to deal with the implications of the U-2 flights for the security of Soviet rocket bases and, indirectly, for the credibility of past Soviet claims regarding Soviet missile strength:

I assert that the data obtained by the spy flights are of no importance to the defense of the United States. We know that the spy flights were carried out just over regions which have no rocket bases. We know that two or three years ago the regions of our proving grounds, where we conduct experimental launchings of our rockets, were photographed. Precisely the proving grounds for testing rocket weapons were photographed, and not military-strategic rocket bases.¹³

This flat assertion implied that Khrushchev had high confidence that U-2's in fact had not photographed objects that could be identified as strategic missile bases. This high confidence, to the extent that it was not feigned, may have been based on one or more of the following considerations:

1. Radar tracking of U-2 overflights in the period since the Soviets began emplacing strategic rockets may have led the Soviets to believe that no bases had been photographed. Considerable effort was expended in building large Tall King radars capable of tracking very high altitude aircraft.

2. Published reports purporting to be based on U.S. intelligence estimates prior to disclosure of the U-2 program indicated that the United States had been unable to locate any operational Soviet strategic missile bases. Apparently, no ICBM launchers, apart from the one at Tyuratam, and only a handful of possible or probable MRBM bases, had in fact been located.

3. The Soviet Union then probably had only one ICBM complex, in addition to the launch facilities at Tyuratam. Operational MRBM's had begun to enter the force in large numbers only toward the end of the period of U-2 activity. Khrushchev may have believed that not many of these could have been photographed by the comparatively few overflights conducted since their construction.

Khrushchev did not rest his case with a denial that the U-2's had acquired the missile-base data they had sought. "Suppose even," he went on, "that rocket bases should be photographed." Such target intelligence, he asserted, could be of value only to a country that is preparing to strike first. But even for such purposes knowledge of the location of an opponent's missile bases would be inadequate, because, "given modern means, it is impossible to put a rocket base out of commission by one, two or even several blows. Rocket technology now ensures the means for dealing a retaliatory blow in any case."

This claim, which was repeated several times but never amplified, is one of the most ambiguous of all. It is difficult to understand, much less to evaluate. The characteristic of

¹³ *Pravda*, June 22, 1960.

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"rocket technology" that allegedly enables missile bases to survive multiple blows is not specified. It is not even clear whether the reference was to deficiencies of the attacking systems or protective measures taken for the missile bases. If the phrase "rocket technology" referred to measures that Soviet leaders had previously claimed were being taken to protect the Soviet missile force—dispersal, camouflage, concealment—these would be inadequate to support the claim. If Khrushchev intended to suggest that Soviet missile bases had been hardened, his claim was then false.¹⁴

The last Soviet claims related to the U-2, and the most far-reaching of the period, pertained to the effectiveness of Soviet air defenses. In his initial treatment of the U-2 affair, Khrushchev restricted himself to boasts that Soviet air defenses could now prevent high-altitude low-speed reconnaissance aircraft of the U-2 type from overflying the Soviet Union with impunity. His purpose was evidently both to deter new flights and to counter the negative effects of his revelation that such flights had been conducted in the past without effective opposition.

Soon, however, possibly in reaction to the State Department's unexpected acknowledgment of presidential responsibility for the overflights, Khrushchev extended his air-defense claim to cover not only U-2's but SAC bombers as well. "If there are still politicians," he said in a speech at the Czechoslovak Embassy on May 9, "who would like to rely on bombers they are doomed to failure. With contemporary military equipment, bombers will be shot down before they approach the target."¹⁵

Thereafter, he exploited the downing of the U-2 as a demonstration of how well Soviet air defenses could perform against SAC bombers. Thus, in a speech on May 28, he stated:

When we shot down the plane flying at 20,000 meters, the American militarists became alarmed. . . . They were alarmed primarily because their whole military concept of attack on the Soviet Union, based on the use of bomber planes, had now fallen to the ground. Modern bombers, after all, fly at an altitude of 12,000 to 15,000 meters, no higher. Consequently, since we downed a plane flying at 20,000 meters, then, of course, not a single bomber could get through to its target. They would be brought down either by rockets, by fighter planes, or by antiaircraft artillery which can shoot at their altitude.¹⁶

Though the Soviet leaders' strategic claims in the aftermath of the U-2 period were addressed chiefly to the USSR's defensive capabilities, the strategic threats they issued against U.S. allies were nevertheless remarkably bold. Khrushchev and Malinovsky stated explicitly

¹⁴ Alternatively, the claim may have been anticipatory, reflecting consideration, possibly then current, of hardening the SS-7 missiles. Still another interpretation that has been suggested is that because a missile "base" consists of several launch sites, each site being capable of multiple fire, Khrushchev may have been claiming that "one, two or even several blows" could not disable all the launchers on a given base.

¹⁵ *Pravda*, May 10, 1960.

¹⁶ *Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

that the Soviet Union would strike any U.S. overseas base from which future overflights might be launched.¹⁷ Moreover, when questioned at a press conference on the type of weapon that would be employed in such a strike, Khrushchev did not deny that it might be nuclear.¹⁸ The Soviet threat to strike bases used in future by U-2's was not issued in the opening days of the U-2 crisis. During the Supreme Soviet session at which the downing of Powers' plane was revealed, Khrushchev stated only that the USSR would give "a most serious warning" to those countries harboring U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. Apparently, the Soviet leaders interpreted the State Department announcement of May 7, Secretary Herter's elaborations of it on May 9, and President Eisenhower's supporting press conference statement two days later as signifying the intention of the United States to continue the flights. (Khrushchev was not officially informed until May 16 that the President had decided to suspend the flights.)

Evidently, discontinuation of the U-2 flights became a major objective of Soviet policy, and the threats were issued to bring pressure to bear on the U.S. allies to persuade or oblige the United States to stop them. The Soviet leaders at that time probably had only recently initiated construction of operational launch complexes for the SS-7 ICBM, which was then under intensive engineering development and was being prepared for flight testing. They may therefore have believed it essential to bring the U-2 program to an end quickly.

President Eisenhower's statement in Paris on May 16 that the U-2 flights had been suspended and would not be resumed must have reassured the Soviet leaders, despite Khrushchev's complaint that the President's pledge applied only until the expiration of his term in office. The threat to strike overseas U.S. bases was repeated several times in May and June, but gradually dropped out of Soviet statements thereafter. In July, when the Soviets shot down an RB-47 in the Barents Sea, Khrushchev explained the Soviet failure to strike the Norwegian base from which it was said to have taken off by asserting that because the intrusion was stopped at the very beginning "the Soviet government limited itself to destroying the aircraft."¹⁹

A concurrent crisis unrelated to the U-2 affair occasioned an unprecedented though ambiguous Soviet strategic threat against the United States itself. On returning to the Soviet Union from his Austrian visit in July, Khrushchev turned his attention to the crisis in U.S.-Cuban relations. Addressing a Teachers' Congress in Moscow on July 9, the Soviet Premier declared:

It should not be forgotten that the U.S. is not so inaccessibly distant from the Soviet Union as it used to be. Figuratively speaking, in case of need Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire if the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to launch

¹⁷ See, for example, *Pravda*, May 10, 12, 29, 30, and June 4, 1960.

¹⁸ *Pravda*, June 4, 1960.

¹⁹ *Pravda*, July 13, 1960.

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an intervention against Cuba. And let them not forget in the Pentagon that, as the latest tests have shown, we have rockets capable of landing directly in a given square at a distance of 15,000 kilometers. This, if you will, is a warning to those who would like to settle international issues by force and not by reason.²⁰

Although this threat was couched as a "figurative" illustration of Soviet missile capabilities, and not directly as a guarantee of assistance to Castro, the contingency that it covered was unique. Never before had a Soviet leader threatened to strike the continental United States in any eventuality other than a U.S. attack on a member of the bloc. It was also the first Soviet threat to retaliate against a U.S. move in the Western hemisphere. In October 1960, under prodding by Cuban journalists who asked him to comment on the "imperialist" contention that his statement was merely "symbolic," Khrushchev replied evasively that he would "like such statements to be really symbolic." But when asked further if Soviet rockets were "adequately prepared" for the possibility that the United States would carry out its threat to intervene, Khrushchev replied affirmatively.²¹ Thus, he kept the ambiguous Soviet threat in force, although strongly indicating his reluctance to carry it out.

²⁰ *Pravda*, July 10, 1960.

²¹ *Pravda*, October 29, 1960.

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V. STRATEGIC PARITY IMPLIED: SEPTEMBER 1960-JUNE 1961

BY THE FALL OF 1960 an important new stage was reached in the regression from: Khrushchev's extreme claim of a missile capability that could wipe any opponent from the face of the earth. Although the two chief elements of this new position had appeared earlier, not until they became more distinct and reinforced each other did they indicate that the USSR had modified its declaratory policy.

1. After January 1960 Khrushchev *no longer asserted that Soviet casualties in nuclear war would be far less than the West's*. In a speech to a foreign audience (in Austria on July 2, 1960), he went so far as to say: "If we start war to settle disputes between States... we shall destroy our Noah's Ark, the Earth."¹

2. After October 1960 Khrushchev said several times that in the event of a world war fatalities would be great on both sides and would amount to "hundreds of millions."

To an extent this bare statement had been anticipated by Khrushchev's early claims of a capability to destroy the NATO countries in Europe, and by his subsequent statement that the USSR could wipe from the face of the earth any country that might attack it. Moreover, Khrushchev had even said explicitly on one occasion, in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1959, that if war broke out, "its toll would run not into millions, but into tens and even hundreds of millions of human lives."² But three months later Khrushchev minimized the USSR's share of these casualties when he told the Supreme Soviet that losses to the Western countries would far exceed Soviet losses.³ However, when Khrushchev began in the fall of 1960 to stress the *general* consequences of nuclear war without differentiating between sides, he seemed to acknowledge that Soviet losses, like the West's, would be a large fraction of the country's population. This theme had been introduced into the Communist Party's theoretical journal some months earlier by the military

¹ *Pravda*, July 1, 1960.

² *Pravda*, September 19, 1959.

³ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960: "We would have many losses, but... the West would suffer incomparably more."

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publicist, General Talensky, who found it "necessary to emphasize that a future war, if the aggressors succeed in unleashing it, will lead to such an increase in human losses *on both sides* that its consequences for mankind might be catastrophic."¹ Several months later Talensky expanded this theme in a sensational article in the political journal, *International Affairs*, then published only in Russian and English.² He said that according to careful calculations (which he did not specify), casualties in a world war would be no less than 500-600 million in the probable main theater, presumably the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, whose total population he estimated at about 800 million. This passage, as well as others in the article, tended to confirm the Soviet people's worst fears regarding the consequences of a new war. Talensky even went so far as to jog his readers' memories of their suffering in the war against Nazi Germany:

Men who lived through the last war recall the terrible destruction of cities which were located in the battle zone. If this degree of destruction is magnified a thousand times and extended over whole continents, then it is possible to form some notion approximating the real consequences of a rocket-nuclear war.

Nothing like this had been told the Soviet people before. Talensky claimed no special advantages for the USSR in limiting casualties, as had been done in the past.

A few weeks after Talensky's article was sent to the printer, Khrushchev stated that a world war "would lead to the deaths of hundreds and hundreds of millions of people."³ This same phrase was subsequently employed by Defense Minister Malinovsky, who thus gave it the authority of a serious military estimate.⁴ Khrushchev offered the Soviet people only this chilling reassurance: "We are convinced that mankind will not perish in the event of war."

The political basis of this new retreat in the Soviet public assessment of the strategic balance is not hard to discover. Khrushchev's disagreement on world communist strategy with the Chinese Communists, and with Mao personally, had erupted in a violent dispute with the CPR's representative at the Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in June 1960. Talensky seems to have been continuing this polemic in his *International Affairs* article by warning the Chinese Communist Party, which had criticized leaders who were fearful of war, that "to depreciate the peril of rocket-nuclear war is criminal." Khrushchev's assertion that hundreds of millions would die in a nuclear war was made in the days preceding the crucial conference of representatives of communist parties in Moscow and was repeated in his report on the results of the conference on January 6, 1961.

¹ *Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1960, pp. 31-41. (Italics supplied.)

² *Mezhdunarodnaya Zvezda*, No. 10, October 1960, p. 33.

³ *Pravda*, October 21, 1960.

⁴ *Pravda*, June 22, 1961.

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STRATEGIC PARITY IMPLIED

By failing to differentiate the peril to the Soviet people from that faced by other peoples, Khrushchev seemed to imply that the strategic balance was one of parity.⁸ (Talensky went even further toward suggesting this.) The U.S. strategic offensive force was thus accorded a respect that it had been denied only a few months previously. Khrushchev's long-standing boasts that the West's bombers were vulnerable to Soviet air defenses, in which he had been joined by Marshal Malinovsky, had reached their climax in the aftermath of the U-2 incident. He then had asserted that "not a single bomber could get through to its target." The West's "whole military concept of attack on the Soviet Union, based on the use of bomber planes, [has] been shattered."⁹

The confidence expressed earlier in the effectiveness of Soviet air defenses probably was a deliberate exaggeration for deterrent purposes, and was not fully justified by the estimates on which Soviet military planning was based. By the end of 1960 the Atlas ICBM was operational; so was the first nuclear submarine armed with Polaris missiles;¹⁰ and SAC bombers had begun to be armed with air-to-surface cruise missiles. Thus, even if the Soviet claim that the SAC bomber force was vulnerable to Soviet air defenses had been valid, it would not have provided an adequate basis for denying the effectiveness of the U.S. strategic offensive force. This was recognized in a key *Red Star* article by Lieutenant General Krasilnikov, who spoke of the need for supplementary means of strategic defense:

Anti-air and anti-rocket defense, which are charged with protecting the rear and the troops, acquire extremely great importance. Destruction of the enemy nuclear-rocket [that is, missiles carrying nuclear warheads], nuclear-aviation [that is, bombers carrying nuclear bombs] and rocket-carrying forces [presumably bombers and submarines capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads] will become one of the primary missions.¹¹

Soviet claims concerning strategic offensive forces in this period stress the availability of large numbers of thermonuclear warheads, but are strikingly vague and evasive as to the means of delivering them, particularly against the United States. The Soviet Union is still said to be "superior in the most up-to-date and effective means of delivering nuclear weapons, intercontinental ballistic missiles."¹² Khrushchev speaks of a plant from which he saw rockets coming "like sausages from an automatic machine, rocket after rocket," though he does not say that the rockets were ICBM's. But in characterizing the strategic balance, Khrushchev and the Soviet marshals do not assert more than that the United States is no longer invulnerable and must take that into account in its calculations. This is an old theme,

⁸The claim that the USSR was militarily the world's strongest power, however, continued to be voiced sporadically.

⁹*Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

¹⁰President Eisenhower's State of the Union Message, January 12, 1961.

¹¹*Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 18, 1960.

¹²Khrushchev's speech to the U.N. General Assembly, September 23, 1960.

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which only serves to mark the retrogression from Khrushchev's bold claims of the winter of 1960. There is still an echo of them in Khrushchev's speech in Sverdlovsk (March 2, 1961): "The Soviet Union has the world's most powerful rocketry and has produced the quantity of atomic and hydrogen bombs necessary to wipe the aggressors from the face of the earth. . . ." As can be seen, however, it is a faint echo. Khrushchev now speaks of the "necessary" quantity of nuclear *bombs*, but says nothing as to the quantity of *rockets* available, only that they are the world's most powerful. Moreover, he claims only that "the aggressors," not the *countries* that are hostile to the Soviet camp, could be wiped from the face of the earth. Thus, the retreat in Soviet strategic claims that was evident after the U-2 incident continued and even became more pronounced in the winter of 1961. Although Soviet leaders continued to claim that the USSR was the strongest military power in the world, a necessary component of the strength such a claim implies—a great quantity of weapon-delivery vehicles capable of striking at the chief adversary—was no longer claimed.¹³ Subsequently, in the fall of 1961, when U.S. officials began to express strong confidence that the United States had a considerable margin of superiority in strategic forces over the USSR, Soviet leaders had already ceased to claim such a superiority for themselves. This was true in spite of an important Soviet military development that had taken place. Successful flight tests of the SS-7, the follow-on ICBM missile, were carried on intensively in April 1961 and the following months.¹⁴

¹³ An exception is Marshal Grechko's May Day article, which accurately quoted Khrushchev's claim of a rocket capability to wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth. (*Pravda*, May 9, 1961.)

¹⁴ FTD letter, Attachment 4. About the same time, flight tests of the SS-6 also began.

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Part Two

VI. RESPONSE BY THE USSR TO REVISED U.S.
INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES: SEPTEMBER 1961
TO THE PRESENT¹

IN SEPTEMBER 1961, on the basis of new information, the U.S. intelligence community sharply downgraded earlier estimates of the Soviet ICBM force that had been projected for mid-1961. The projected mid-1961 Soviet ICBM force had been pared down annually in the U.S. estimates since 1959, and this had progressively narrowed the "missile gap" expected in that period. The September 1961 estimate eliminated it altogether. Moreover, the range of uncertainty in the new estimates was sharply reduced, because the difference between the upper and lower limits estimated by the various contributing intelligence agencies had been greatly narrowed.² The new information also strengthened confidence in previous estimates that the USSR possessed a very large MRBM force.

Soon after the new estimates were completed, the general sense of their contents became known to the press, notably to columnists Joseph Alsop and Drew Pearson. In September 1961 Alsop wrote:

Prior to the recent recalculation the maximum number of ICBM's that the Soviets were thought to have at this time was on the order of 200—just about enough to permit the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on the United States. The maximum has now been drastically reduced, however, to less than a quarter of the former figure—well under 50 ICBM's and, therefore, not nearly enough to allow the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on this country. The number of Soviet heavy bombers of intercontinental range meanwhile remains unchanged, at about 150.³

¹This problem is not dealt with exhaustively here, but only insofar as the Soviet response is reflected in assertions regarding the military balance.

²This is reflected in Stewart Alsop's recent interview with Secretary McNamara in the *Saturday Evening Post*, December 1, 1962, p. 18:

Alsop: "How confident are you that the myth of the missile gap was and is a myth?"

McNamara: "*Absolutely confident*. Of course there is a margin of error. There always is. But the margin of error is much less than the margin of our superiority."

³*Washington Post and Times Herald*, September 25, 1961.

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Neither Alsop's column nor other newspaper accounts of the new U.S. intelligence estimates were explicitly mentioned or commented on by Soviet media at that time. Presumably, the Soviet leaders preferred not to challenge these journalistic accounts and, because no U.S. official had publicly confirmed them, they did not feel obliged to do so.

About a month later, however, Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric delivered the first of what turned out to be a series of speeches and statements on the strategic balance by high-ranking administration officials. Although the administration leaders did not explicitly refer to the revised intelligence estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, it was evident that their new appraisal of the strategic balance rested heavily on them. The essence of this reappraisal, and what distinguished it most sharply from public evaluations by U.S. officials in the recent past, was the unequivocal claim that the United States enjoyed a wide margin of strategic superiority over the USSR. Thus, Secretary Gilpatric declared that, even after absorbing a Soviet surprise attack, the surviving U.S. forces would probably be greater than the forces used by the USSR in its first strike. "In short," he said, "we have a second-strike capability which is at least as extensive as what the Soviets can deliver by striking first."¹

In the months that followed Secretary Gilpatric's speech, which, U.S. media made clear, had been reviewed and approved by the White House and State Department, confident assertions of strategic superiority were issued by the Secretary of Defense and by other administration leaders.

The new U.S. intelligence estimates and the revised U.S. declaratory policy based on them implicitly raised a question as to the credibility of past Soviet strategic claims. Secretary Gilpatric made this explicit when he stated on October 21:

We doubt that the Soviet leadership has in fact any less realistic views, although this may not always be apparent from their extravagant claims. While the Soviets use rigid security as a military weapon their Iron Curtain is not so impenetrable as to force us to accept at face value the Kremlin's boasts.²

Such a direct, high-level challenge could be ignored by the Soviet leaders only at the risk of permitting their silence to be understood as assent, the consequences of which might have far-reaching political implications. It was to Secretary Gilpatric's speech and other public statements by U.S. leaders regarding U.S. strategic superiority that Soviet spokesmen replied, and not to the earlier press leaks concerning a revision in U.S. intelligence estimates of the Soviet ICBM capability.

Secretary Gilpatric's speech drew an immediate public response from the Soviet leadership. Addressing the XXII Congress of the CPSU on October 23, one day after the Deputy

¹The New York Times, October 22, 1961.

²News Release No. 1173-61, Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, October 21, 1961.

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Secretary's speech was reported in the U.S. press. Soviet Defense Minister Malinovsky declared:

On October 21 of this year—that is quite recently, Roswell Gilpatric, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, apparently not without President Kennedy's knowledge, addressed a business council in Virginia. Brandishing the might of the United States, he threatened us with force. What can one say to this one more threat, to this petty statement? One can say just one thing: This threat does not frighten us."

This response, lacking in substance, said nothing about Secretary Gilpatric's appraisal of the strategic balance or about Soviet ICBM capabilities; it addressed itself only to the political implication of the speech, interpreting the latter as an effort to frighten the Soviet Union and asserting its failure to do so. By and large, Soviet press and radio commentaries on Secretary Gilpatric's speech went no further than to repeat Malinovsky's words: "This threat does not frighten us."

The subsequent series of speeches by high-ranking administration officials was quickly evaluated by Soviet publicists as a concerted campaign to bring U.S. strategic power to bear politically on outstanding issues between the United States and the Soviet Union, notably the Berlin dispute. For example, a Soviet radio commentator named Zorin said of the speeches:

One's attention is drawn to the circumstance that what is under discussion on this occasion is not the speech of any one wild general or politician who has lost his equilibrium but a clearly organized campaign whose aim, judging by everything, is to intimidate the Soviet Union and exacerbate still further the international situation."

During the fall and winter of 1961–1962, top Soviet military leaders, including Defense Minister Malinovsky, issued replies to the speeches of their American counterparts, but Khrushchev refrained from direct comment on the matter. Late in March, however, after the publication of Stewart Alsop's interview with President Kennedy in the *Saturday Evening Post*,² the dialogue moved to the summit. The initial, and unusually prompt, Soviet rejoinder took the form of a *Pravda* article (March 31) by "Observer," a medium frequently employed for high-level, but anonymous, Soviet communications.³

Concentrating on the President's statement that "under certain circumstances, we might have to take the initiative" in a nuclear strike, "Observer" declared: "The gist of the President's statement... is that the Government of the United States, far from renouncing the

² *Pravda*, October 25, 1961.

³ Radio Moscow Home Service, November 16, 1961.

⁴ *Saturday Evening Post*, March 31, 1962. The issue actually appeared several days before March 31, thus allowing time for a hastily prepared reply in the issue of *Pravda* for March 31.

"Although the Soviets generally adhere to the practice of using Soviet counterparts to conduct polemics with U.S. leaders, Khrushchev may have deemed the "Observer" article appropriate for expressing his views, because the President had not addressed the USSR directly, but had spoken through Alsop.

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solution of disputes by military means, considers itself entitled to strike the first atomic blow, to become the initiator of a war of aggression. . . ." The President, whose views previously had been pointedly dissociated from those of his aides,¹⁰ was now said to have "joined those whom he only recently so wrathfully, and justly, condemned, at least in words." Now, "Observer" asserted, he was "taking the position of the most bellicose part of the Pentagon brass." In its reply to the President the following day, the Defense Ministry organ, *Red Star*, said: "The idea of the possibility of a 'first blow' must be understood as a new attempt by the U.S.A. to frighten the Soviet Union and to secure from us one-sided concessions on controversial questions related to the situation in Europe."¹¹

Beginning in May, Khrushchev repeatedly alluded to the President's statement and charged Kennedy, among other things, with advocating "preventive war" (May 19, June 10, 12, and 19, 1962). It was clear that the Soviet leaders had taken note of and were sensitive to the change in U.S. statements regarding the strategic balance and that they regarded it as an element in a new U.S. effort to press the USSR on outstanding political issues. No doubt they understood the change to stem from the reported U.S. reassessment of Soviet ICBM capabilities. The question arises, however, whether the Soviet leaders credited U.S. leaders with actually believing what were reported in the American press as revised U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet strategic capabilities; or whether they considered that the U.S. leaders were bluffing. Given the strained state of U.S.-Soviet relations at the time (the Berlin wall had been erected, and the conflict in Laos was yet unresolved), it may have appeared to Soviet leaders that the reported American intelligence revision had come at a suspiciously opportune time for the United States. Only a few months earlier in Vienna, the President had reportedly told the Soviet Premier that "our forces are equal," an appraisal of the strategic balance that Khrushchev and other Soviet spokesmen were frequently to recall in the months that followed.¹²

A separate, but related question, to which the Soviet leaders presumably knew the answer, was this: Were the new U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities correct, or at any rate were they closer approximations to the truth than previous estimates?

What light does the Soviet response to this change in the publicly expressed U.S. view of the military balance shed on these questions? The evidence presented in the following

¹⁰ For example, commenting on Secretary McNamara's *New York Journal-American* interview, TASS (October 31) stated: "Trying to impress the world, the Pentagon chief even tended to ignore the pronouncements of his President, who declared that in his opinion the Soviet Union and the United States were equal in military power."

¹¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, April 1, 1962.

¹² This appraisal was initially reported by Khrushchev in his radio-TV address of August 7, 1961. (*Pravda*, August 8, 1961.) See also Khrushchev's interview with Sulzberger (*Pravda*, September 10, 1961); his report to the Central Committee (*Pravda*, October 18, 1961); and Marshal Malinovsky's answers to a *Pravda* correspondent (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 25, 1962).

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pages strongly suggests that (a) the Soviet leaders believed that American leaders had revised their estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, as reported in the American press, and (b) these revised estimates were in fact more nearly correct than previous ones.

READINESS TO ACCEPT STRATEGIC PARITY

Although the Soviet leaders have challenged the new U.S. appraisal of the strategic balance, they have responded publicly in such a way as to evade the crucial question of the number of Soviet ICBM's that are operational. Because American officials did not directly confront the Soviet leaders with the revised U.S. estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, the question was posed only indirectly and its evasion was not conspicuous.

The main objective of the Soviet response has evidently been to deprive American claims to superiority of their political value by re-emphasizing that the Soviet Union has an adequate retaliatory capability.¹³ Claims of Soviet military superiority have become relatively rare, certainly far less frequent than in the preceding two years. There has been a marked tendency to speak in general terms about "the correlation of world forces" rather than explicitly about the balance of military power. Thus, for example, in his May 18 speech at a rally in Sofia, Khrushchev declared:

Our strength today is not illusory but is enormous and real. The President of the United States himself said to me that our military forces were equal. I made no objection to this¹⁴ although we are in fact stronger than imperialism, because our forces include not only the socialist states but all progressive and peace-loving forces on earth, all people who hold peace dear. These peace-loving forces are greater than the forces of imperialism.¹⁵

Similarly, in his formal report on behalf of the Central Committee to the XXII CPSU Congress in October 1961, Khrushchev stated that "now the forces of socialism, all the forces which support the struggle for peace, are more powerful than the aggressive imperialist forces."¹⁶ These are general statements on the broad political balance of forces in the world rather than on the specifically military balance; they add to the forces of the Soviet camp not only the neutralist countries, but presumably also the "peace" forces operating within the capitalist nations. As for the military balance, Khrushchev in his pre-election speech in Moscow on March 16, 1962, referred to it only to mention the loss by the United States of its earlier monopoly of nuclear weapons and other types of modern arms.¹⁷ Thus, he reverted

¹³ A subsidiary theme, implying the possibility of Soviet pre-emption, is discussed below (pp. 53-55); as employed by Khrushchev, this theme also seems designed to prevent the United States from deriving political advantages from threats to take the nuclear initiative.

¹⁴ In the live broadcast of the speech, Khrushchev actually recalled saying to the President: "It is nice of you to say this, but..." (Sofia Domestic Service, May 18, 1962. Italics supplied.)

¹⁵ *Pravda*, May 19, 1962.

¹⁶ *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

¹⁷ *Pravda*, March 17, 1962.

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to an argument advanced half a decade earlier, when Soviet strategic nuclear capability was just emerging.

After publication of the President's *Saturday Evening Post* interview, there was a temporary reversion to explicit claims of broad Soviet military superiority, but direct comparisons of Soviet and U.S. intercontinental strike capabilities were avoided. Thus, "Observer" reiterated the 1961 claim that "in military power, the Soviet Union surpasses the U.S.A.," but also advanced a new formulation, repeated on several occasions by Soviet leaders in the early spring, though not thereafter: "[In] its ability to deliver a massive nuclear blow the Soviet Union today surpasses the United States." This claim does not assert that the USSR can deliver a more "massive nuclear blow" against the United States than the United States can deliver against the Soviet Union, but presumably embraces Soviet strike capabilities against the European NATO countries, which U.S. leaders have publicly conceded are powerful, as well as the intercontinental forces. Thus, superiority is claimed in the aggregate, but not necessarily in each of its parts, nor in the most crucial one.¹⁸

In his major speech on military affairs at the Moscow disarmament conference in July, Khrushchev explicitly noted the changed character of American pronouncements on the strategic balance. He did not say that U.S. leaders had revised their previous appraisals, but rather that they had begun to assert that the balance of forces had changed in favor of the United States. Though he stated that such assertions were "groundless" and that the Americans "have no data at all to back up this claim," he refuted them not by reaffirming Soviet superiority, but by arguing that the military balance of power could be determined only during the course of war and ultimately by its outcome.¹⁹ Recalling that Hitler had maintained he had an overwhelming preponderance of force, but was "finally" defeated by the USSR and its allies, Khrushchev warned that with the existence of nuclear-rocket weapons miscalculations of the balance of power were of immeasurably greater danger "to the peoples." It is noteworthy that Khrushchev did not deny that Hitler's forces were superior to the USSR's when the war began—a point now conceded by Soviet leaders and attributed to Stalin's prewar errors and miscalculations—but recalled only that Hitler was ultimately defeated.²⁰

A new characteristic of Soviet statements regarding the strategic balance since mid-1961 had been their explicitly expressed readiness to accept strategic parity as the basic assumption from which political settlements should proceed. The theme that equal strategic forces

¹⁸ For an analysis of the Soviet use of such undifferentiated aggregates in strategic claims, see pp. 75-77.

¹⁹ *Pravda*, July 11, 1962. For the text of Khrushchev's statement, see p. 71.

²⁰ Marshal Yerenenko had written earlier that although superiority in military preparedness had not proved decisive in the past, "today the center of gravity has to a large if not decisive extent shifted to the opening stage of a war." The present Soviet government, he wrote, "is doing all in its power to remove any possibility of the recurrence of the state of affairs which existed in the first stages of the Great Patriotic War." (*International Affairs*, January 1962.)

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should be translated into equal political rights was introduced by Khrushchev in his speech of July 8, 1961, at a Kremlin reception for graduates of Moscow military academies, in which he stated that strategic parity was now conceded by the West: "However, the necessary conclusions are not being drawn from this fact. With equal forces, there must be equal rights and opportunities. . . ."²¹

In his radio and TV speech on the Berlin crisis on August 7, 1961, Khrushchev said that President Kennedy had acknowledged during their talks in Vienna that the military forces of the two sides were equal.²² The Soviet Premier has reverted to the President's alleged concession on numerous occasions since that time. He referred to it, almost nostalgically, even after the President's *Saturday Evening Post* interview: "There was a time when Eisenhower, the former U.S. President, and the present President, Kennedy, had a realistic attitude, stating that the military strength of the Soviet Union and of the United States was equal. President Kennedy set forth such an attitude during the meeting with me in Vienna."²³

Recalling the President's statement in September 1961, during his interview with Sulzberger of *The New York Times*, Khrushchev added that, although he personally believed the Soviet side to be stronger, he was prepared to act as if the forces were actually equal, because such beliefs could be verified only by war.²⁴ Thus, instead of playing on the West's uncertainty regarding Soviet strategic forces, Khrushchev now began to speak of an uncertainty that was intrinsic to the strategic balance. Marshal Malinovsky adopted a similar line in January 1962, when he replied to Secretary McNamara's Congressional testimony:

Here I should like to correct Mr. McNamara. U.S. President John Kennedy once admitted that our strength is equal. *This was a more or less correct acknowledgment* and it is high time that the American military leaders drew appropriate conclusions from it. I hold that today the socialist camp is stronger than these countries [United States and its NATO allies] *but let us even presume that the forces are equal. We are ready to agree to this so as not to take part in stirring up a war psychosis. But since our forces are equal the American leaders should make correct conclusions and pursue a reasonable policy.*²⁵

TEMPERING OF CLAIMS REGARDING SOVIET CAPABILITY TO DAMAGE THE UNITED STATES

The new Soviet readiness to accept a state of strategic parity has been accompanied by a change in the character of claims regarding the Soviet strike capability against the United States. The emphasis has shifted from the *high level* of destruction that could be

²¹ *Pravda*, July 9, 1961.

²² *Pravda*, August 8, 1961.

²³ *Pravda*, July 19, 1962.

²⁴ *Pravda*, September 9, 1961.

²⁵ *Pravda*, January 25, 1962. (Italics supplied.)

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inflicted to the *certainty* that retaliation would occur. The formulation, "wipe from the face of the earth," which Khrushchev in 1959 and 1960 applied to *any hostile country* that might attack the USSR, is now applied only to certain categories of *targets* in the United States; it continues to be applied to countries allied to the United States.

A striking expression of the Soviet retreat from the 1959-1960 claims is their tacit revision by the Commander in Chief of Soviet Rocket Troops, Marshal K. Moskalenko. Referring back to the Supreme Soviet session at which Khrushchev made the original claim, Moskalenko wrote in *Red Star* for September 13, 1961: "A definitive characterization of the might of the rocket troops was given at the Fourth Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet—our country has means which can 'literally wipe from the face of the earth *entire states*' if they should try to attack us [*italics supplied*]." This claim that the Soviet Union could "wipe from the face of the earth *entire states*" asserts no more than what had been claimed countless times by Soviet spokesmen for several years prior to 1960. It was the second time that Moskalenko had referred publicly to Khrushchev's warning of January 14, 1960, and the second time he had emended it in such a way as to weaken its ICBM implications.²⁶

Country-busting claims now specify the European NATO countries. Typical of the new Soviet emphasis on the certainty of retaliation, and of Soviet failure to delineate the level of destruction that could be inflicted against the United States, is the following statement by Marshal Biriuzov in *Sovetskaiia Rossiia* for October 3, 1961:

If the U.S. imperialists who are threatening the Soviet people with thermonuclear war should dare to unleash one *they will have to pay for it*. Neither the oceans surrounding the shores of North America nor the deepest atomic shelters now so strenuously advertised by the monopolistic press *will save them from just and inevitable retribution*. [*Italics supplied.*]

This retreat on the part of the Soviet leadership was apparently alluded to by Defense Secretary McNamara in his address before the American Bar Foundation in Chicago on February 17, 1962: "Today not even the most boastful Russian rocket-rattler asserts that the Soviet Union has the nuclear power to destroy the United States."²⁷

Red Star's rejoinder four days later avoided a direct refutation, but emphasized instead Secretary McNamara's acknowledgment that the Soviet Union could inflict serious damage on West Europe, and warned that the United States would be unable to "escape at the expense of West Europe" if it started a nuclear war.²⁸

Another instance of the retreat from Khrushchev's January 1960 claim to a position that distinguishes between Soviet strike capabilities against Europe and against the United

²⁶ For Moskalenko's first reference to Khrushchev's claim, see p. 27, n. 22.

²⁷ News Release No. 239-62, Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, February 17, 1962.

²⁸ *Krasnaia Zvezda*, February 21, 1962.

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States was Defense Minister Malinovsky's *Pravda* interview on January 25, 1962, in reply to Secretary of Defense McNamara's Congressional testimony. The Secretary had stated that the United States had the capability, even after suffering a Soviet first strike, of destroying the selected Soviet target system. Malinovsky replied:

On my part I could state that we are capable of wiping off the face of the earth with one rocket-nuclear blow any targets, *all the industrial and administrative-political centers of the U.S.* We are capable of *destroying whole countries* which have provided their territories as sites for American war bases around the Soviet Union and other socialist states. [*Italics supplied.*]

The absence of any reference to *strategic targets* in the United States is noteworthy, because analogous statements in the past by Soviet leaders, including Khrushchev and Malinovsky, have included explicit references to strategic as well as industrial and administrative targets in the United States. After publication of the President's *Saturday Evening Post* interview, *Pravda's* "Observer" attempted to correct this omission by substituting "strategic targets" for "administrative-political centers" in Malinovsky's statement, thus implying that the present Soviet force contained sufficient ICBM's to destroy military targets in the United States. But on the following day, in its reply to the President's interview, *Red Star* reproduced Malinovsky's statement in its original form. The three formulations—Malinovsky's, *Pravda's*, and *Red Star's*—are given below.

Malinovsky
(January 25)

On my part, I could state that we are capable of wiping from the face of the earth with one rocket-nuclear blow any targets, all the industrial and administrative-political centers of the U.S.A.

Pravda
(March 31)

In reply to aggression, the Soviet armed forces, as the USSR Defense Minister stressed recently, are capable of wiping from the face of the earth any strategic targets, whole industrial centers on U.S. territory.

Krasnaia Zvezda
(April 1)

In reply to aggression, the Soviet armed forces, as the USSR Defense Minister, Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. Malinovsky, stressed recently, are capable of wiping from the face of the earth with one rocket-nuclear blow any targets, all the industrial and administrative-political centers of the U.S.A.

Finally, in May 1962, when Malinovsky replied personally to President Kennedy's "nuclear initiative" statement, he advanced a new formulation concerning the U.S. targets that would be subjected to attack in the event of war, and in this he explicitly mentioned "military centers."²⁷

²⁷"No 'pre-emptive' blows of any kind, no defensive measures of any kind, could enable the American imperialists to avert an all-destructive retaliatory blow on the economic, transportation, military, and administrative centers of the U.S.A." (*Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1962, p. 13.)

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RESPONSE TO U.S. PRONOUNCEMENTS ON STRATEGY FOR NUCLEAR WAR

The inconsistencies in recent Soviet targeting statements may reflect uncertainty or differences among the Soviet leaders on how best to cope with new U.S. pronouncements on nuclear war strategy. In their recent public statements, Soviet leaders have been concerned with two related elements in the American pronouncements: (a) the new U.S. doctrine of "controlled nuclear response," and (b) the threat of a U.S. first strike "under certain circumstances."

Regarding the first question, Soviet declaratory policy stresses that a strategy of "city-sparing" is unfeasible and that in any event the USSR, if attacked, would respond with all-out retaliation. Khrushchev alluded to this even before Secretary McNamara spelled out the U.S. doctrine. In August 1961 he told a visiting Romanian delegation:

Perhaps there are some people who expect that certain cities will be proclaimed open cities, as was possible to do during the last war. But one should not allow oneself to indulge in illusions. In a future thermonuclear war, if it is touched off, there will be no difference between the front and rear. . . . Our hand will not falter in striking the blow.³⁰

Red Star stated editorially on October 6 that it would be best for "the transatlantic militarists to give up their hopes that anyone will negotiate with them after atomic bombs explode." "All the mighty arsenal of the socialist countries will be put into action," the Defense Ministry newspaper asserted, "and the warmongers will get what they deserve for their crimes" (italics supplied). Replying in February to Secretary McNamara's Chicago Bar Foundation speech, in which three alternative American nuclear war strategies were set forth, *Red Star* warned that the United States would have "neither the time nor the opportunity" to choose among these alternatives in the event of war.³¹ And Radio Moscow's military commentator, Colonel Vasiliev, asserted that if the West were to attack the Soviet Union "no appeals that blows should be directed only at military objectives could prevent the all-devastating counterblow at the economic, transportation, and military and administrative centers of the United States and its allies."³²

In July Khrushchev attacked the U.S. Defense Secretary's speech of June 16 on "controlled response" as "a monstrous [proposal], permeated from beginning to end with hatred of people and mankind, for it seeks to legalize nuclear warfare and thereby the death of millions and millions of people."³³ He said it was designed to divert the main Soviet blow away from the United States and on to the territory of those countries where U.S. overseas

³⁰ *Pravda*, August 12, 1961.

³¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 21, 1962.

³² Radio Moscow, June 29, 1962.

³³ *Pravda*, July 11, 1962.

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bases were located. He further argued that it was meant to deceive the American people as well, because bases in the United States were in or near large cities. He added: "A nuclear-rocket war completely erases boundaries between front and rear. Moreover, it will be *first of all* the civilian population that will fall victim to the weapons of mass annihilation [italics supplied]."

As long as they were confident that their opponents credited them with an assured second-strike capability, the Soviet leaders could regard as adequate a declaratory policy that threatened to destroy American cities in a second strike, even if the United States should attempt to spare Soviet cities in a first strike. But the confidence of Soviet leaders may have been shaken by evidence that U.S. leaders had revised their estimates of Soviet strategic capabilities. Moscow has interpreted President Kennedy's statement on "nuclear initiative" particularly as a revival of the "preventive war" concept and as an effort to bring political pressure to bear on the USSR by threatening a U.S. first strike "under certain circumstances." Apparently recognizing that such threats implicitly question the capacity of the USSR to retaliate effectively after suffering a first strike, Khrushchev has responded by invoking the threat of Soviet pre-emption. At the same time, he has been careful to express his reluctance to engage the United States in a race to strike first. In a speech in Sofia on May 18 the Soviet Premier said:

We cannot ignore the statement made by Mr. Kennedy because it introduces a new element in the relations between our countries. Does not this statement mean that the U.S. President wishes to urge me, as the head of the Soviet Government, to compete with him in who will be the first to "push the button"? We are against any such competition. It must be clear to every clear-thinking man how dangerous, inhuman, and unwise this would be. Knowing the aggressive character of imperialism, we must keep our powder dry and be in fitting readiness.³⁴

He expatiated on this theme again in July:

Certain responsible statesmen in America even declare openly their readiness to take upon themselves "the initiative in a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union." Ponder these words. This is not only a threat of thermonuclear war, but also an imposition of a sinister competition as to who will be the first to start such a war. Since they are saying that they may be the first to unleash a war, they are, as it were, prompting other countries: hurry up, they say, in order to forestall [*upredit'*] the enemy. Where can this lead? It is clear to everyone: to catastrophic consequences.³⁵

Public allusions by high-ranking Soviet officials to pre-emption, first noted in the Soviet literature during the 1954-1955 discussions on the revision of Stalinist military doctrine, were

³⁴ *Pravda*, May 19, 1962.

³⁵ *Pravda*, July 11, 1962.

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revived after a hiatus of several years at the XXII CPSU Congress in October 1961. The ground was prepared in the late summer and early fall through a series of statements by top-ranking military leaders pledging that the USSR would not permit a repetition of the June 1941 Nazi surprise attack:

We cannot and will not be in the same situation as we were at that time [June 1941]. [Marshal Grechko, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 6, 1961.]

We cannot sit with folded hands and look on with indifference at the way in which the ruling circles of the Western powers are pushing the world toward war. We do not want to find ourselves in the position in which we were in 1941. This time we shall not allow the imperialists to catch us unawares. [Marshal Malinovsky, *Pravda*, September 14, 1961.]

We must constantly sharpen [our vigilance] in order to frustrate the plans of the imperialists for a surprise attack on our country and to prevent a repetition of the sorry lessons of the initial period of the last war. [General of the Army Zhadov, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 20, 1961.]

We will not let 1941 happen again, nor let the imperialists take us unawares. [Marshal Biriuzov, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, October 3, 1961.]

In his speech at the Party Congress in October, Soviet Defense Minister Malinovsky stated flatly that the West was preparing a "surprise nuclear attack" against the Soviet Union. Therefore, he declared: "Soviet military doctrine considers that the most important, the chief and most immediate task of the armed forces is: to be in constant readiness reliably to repel an enemy surprise attack and to frustrate his criminal designs."³⁶ Later, in discussing the training of the armed forces, he specified "the timely delivery of a destructive blow" on the enemy as the means to "frustrate his aggressive designs." This formulation, or variations of it, has since been reiterated both by Malinovsky and by Soviet writers on military doctrine.³⁷ They have spoken of the *need* for a capability to deal "timely blows" as a tenet of Soviet military doctrine. Khrushchev, on the other hand, has warned of the *possibility* that U.S. declaratory policy might *compel* him, despite his fear that this would lead to catastrophic

³⁶ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

³⁷ For example, Malinovsky in *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 11, 1961, and *Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1962. In his *Kommunist* article, Malinovsky's most recent statement on the problem, he retreated from his original position by introducing revisions that largely deprived the formulation of its pre-emptive connotations. He omitted the reference to "timely" blows and implied that frustrating "the enemy's criminal designs" was a peacetime objective. "This means that our defensive might must be such as to be able to instill in the aggressor uncertainty as to the outcome of the war planned by him, to nip in the bud his criminal designs and finally, if war should become a fact, decisively to destroy the aggressor." (Italics supplied.) However, Malinovsky's original XXII Congress formulation was repeated verbatim in articles published at the same time in the Central Committee journal for the armed forces and in the Defense Ministry newspaper. (Colonel General N. Lomov in *Kommunist Vozrozhdeniye* 51, No. 10, May 1962, pp. 19-20; and Colonel I. Sidelnikov, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, May 11, 1962.) Moreover, *Krasnaya Zvezda* stated editorially two months later (July 7, 1962) that the foremost duty of Soviet officers "is to be in constant readiness to repel an enemy surprise attack and to frustrate his criminal designs by means of the timely delivery of a destructive blow."

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consequences, "to engage the U.S. President in a sinister competition as to who will be the first to start a war." In expressing his concern about American efforts to derive political advantage from references to the nuclear initiative, Khrushchev has once again demonstrated his extreme sensitivity to U.S. declaratory policy on nuclear war.²⁸

NATO ALLIES AS SOVIET HOSTAGES

Soviet claims regarding the level of damage that the USSR could inflict on the United States have been tempered since the fall of 1961, but analogous claims regarding West Europe have been stated even more baldly than in the past. Although the official Soviet version of Khrushchev's interview with Sulzberger in September 1961 did not include Khrushchev's brutal reference to the West European allies of the United States as hostages, the Soviet government took the unusual step of reprinting in *Izvestia* (September 9, 1961) the text of Sulzberger's version of the interview as it appeared in *The New York Times*:

Khrushchev believes absolutely that when it comes to a showdown, Britain, France and Italy would refuse to join the United States in a war over Berlin for fear of their absolute destruction. Quite blandly he asserts that these countries are figuratively speaking hostages to the USSR and a guarantee against war.

Khrushchev's "hostage" notion implies Soviet reliance on a mortal threat against countries allied to the United States as a political means of mobilizing West European pressure on the United States to avoid policies that risk general war, and perhaps also as an indirect means of deterring the United States itself. In such a strategic concept, the crucial aspect of the U.S.-Soviet military balance is the U.S. capacity to prevent the Soviet Union from destroying Western Europe, not its capacity to destroy the USSR while preserving its own people and resources. Clearly, this strategic concept has serious military and political limitations.²⁹ But whatever its political aim, it requires that the USSR continue to be credited with the capability to annihilate allied countries, even in the face of unfavorable changes in beliefs of the allies about the U.S.-Soviet military balance. Soviet concern about this is reflected in the disproportionate buildup of Soviet continental nuclear striking power (MRBM's and medium bombers) as compared with its intercontinental striking force.

²⁸This sensitivity to U.S. declaratory policy may readily be inferred from Khrushchev's persistent efforts, documented in this study, to influence it in ways favorable to Soviet interests. He publicly acknowledged as much in a revealing bit of reminiscence in August 1961: "There was a time when American Secretary of State Dulles brandished thermonuclear bombs and followed a 'positions of strength' policy with regard to the socialist countries. . . . That was barefaced atomic blackmail, but it had to be reckoned with at the time because we did not possess sufficient means of retaliation, and, if we did, they were not as many and not of the same power as those of our opponents." (*Pravda*, August 12, 1961. Italics supplied.)

²⁹In the final analysis, there is a contradiction between a military strategy that relies heavily on deterring the United States by holding its allies as hostages and a political strategy that aims at detaching the allies from the United States, thus diminishing the value of the allies as Soviet hostages.

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Insofar as NATO allies of the United States are inclined to accept the revised U.S. appraisal of the U.S.-Soviet military balance, the task of the Soviet leaders, in accordance with the "hostage" concept, is to persuade allied leaders and publics that even if the United States enjoyed strategic superiority over the USSR, it could not prevent the destruction of their countries in the event of war. This, indeed, was the crux of the Soviet position before the USSR was credited with a strategic capability against the United States. Now once again, apparently in response to changes in the U.S. appraisal of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance, this tactic has been employed against the allies of the United States.⁴⁰

For example, in a recent broadcast beamed to Japan, the political commentator, Mikhailov, alluded to reports circulating in Japan regarding the revised U.S. appraisal of the strategic balance. He went on to say:

We do not know where . . . these data were obtained. However, it is certain that even if one exaggerates the military strength of a superior [*sic*] power that is signatory of the Security Treaty and boasts of its superiority, *the danger that the Security Treaty has brought to Japan will not decrease at all.* . . . Recall the statement of Soviet Defense Minister Malinovsky. He said that the Soviet Union with its nuclear rockets is capable of annihilating with one blow those countries which have permitted other countries to maintain military bases in areas adjacent to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.⁴¹

A similar line in regard to Turkey was taken by the Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov, in a *Pravda* interview on February 2, 1962. Referring to a speech by British Admiral Holland-Martin, in which the NATO Mediterranean Fleet commander pledged that NATO forces would come immediately to Turkey's assistance in the event of a Soviet attack, Gorshkov replied:

If Turkey continues to fulfill the role to which it has been assigned in the plans of the military blocs of NATO and CENTO, then, in the event of [war], a rocket nuclear blow will, of course, be inflicted on Turkey. After this, the "assistance" which Admiral Holland-Martin so generously promises to Turkey will certainly not be asked for, because it will already not be needed by anyone.

NEW APPRECIATION OF BOMBERS

Another aspect of the Soviet response to the revised U.S. estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities has been a more favorable public evaluation of weapons that Soviet leaders had formerly downgraded. As we have already seen, Soviet leaders began publicly to depreciate

⁴⁰ Khrushchev put it bluntly to the West Germans in 1959: "[Western military men] say they have more bombers than the Soviet Union. They allege that the Soviet Union has few intercontinental rockets. They would have you believe that the U.S. stands to lose least from a war. Even if this were true, does this make you Germans feel any better?" (*Pravda*, May 9, 1959.)

⁴¹ Radio Moscow, January 31, 1962. (Italics supplied.)

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manned bombers after the first ICBM test firing and the launching of the first Sputnik. At that time manned bombers were the sole means operationally available to the USSR to deliver nuclear bombs on U.S. targets.

In the second half of 1957 and early 1958, references to a Soviet submarine-launched missile capability also appeared prominently in Soviet claims. Since limited numbers of short-range rockets were believed operational at that time, this limited submarine capability, rather than the Soviet heavy bomber force, was presumably designed to bridge the gap between successful testing and actual deployment of Soviet land-based ICBM's. Later, Soviet missile-launching submarine capabilities were consigned to a distinctly secondary role in Soviet claims regarding strategic offensive capabilities.

Manned bomber capabilities were depreciated further by Khrushchev in January 1960 (see p. 28). Presumably, the USSR was willing to sacrifice credit for the limited manned bomber capability it possessed to enhance the political value of the widespread Western belief that the USSR was about to acquire a substantial ICBM force. However, as evidence mounted that U.S. leaders were not crediting the USSR with the large ICBM capability forecast in earlier intelligence projections, the "supplementary" strategic means again became prominent in Soviet claims. This was evident as early as the summer of 1961. At that time new air-to-surface missiles were displayed at the annual Soviet Air Show, and Soviet leaders asserted for the first time that the Soviet Union had built nuclear submarines "in no smaller quantity" than the United States.⁴²

Current Soviet statements typically list the entire arsenal of long-range delivery means at the disposal of the Soviet Union, not just land-based missiles. Occasionally, the "supplementary" means are even given precedence over land-based missiles, as in a statement by Marshal Biriuzov in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* for October 3, 1961, which went so far as to rescue surface naval craft from the oblivion to which Khrushchev had consigned them years earlier:

We must mention that we also have reliable means for delivering such superpowerful warheads. We have super-long-range rocket-carrying aircraft, warships equipped with rockets of various classes, and high-speed submarines with atomic power plants and practically unlimited range. Our rocket troops have powerful intercontinental ballistic rockets and complex radio-electronic equipment to control their flight.

Air Marshal Vershinin emphasized that the new aircraft displayed at the Aviation Show in July 1961 "were not experimental aircraft, but series-produced, and they are found in the armament of line units of the Soviet Air Force."⁴³ This was never said explicitly of ICBM's, although they often were declared to be in serial production.

⁴² See, for example, *Izvestia*, July 22, 1961.

⁴³ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 16, 1961, (Italics supplied.)

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Khrushchev himself reflected the shift away from exclusive emphasis on missiles when he said in his report to the XXII Party Congress: "In equipping the armed forces with rockets and an atomic submarine fleet, we are not leaving the air force out of our reckoning; we are continuing to develop and improve it."⁴¹ Also illustrative of the enhanced role accorded to manned bombers in recent Soviet strategic claims was Vershinin's warning to the West Germans, in September 1961, "that it will not take long to remove the covers from our rockets and aircraft, to smash the fascist cur if it dares to crawl beyond its borders."⁴² This statement contrasts with Khrushchev's in May 1960: "We have no bombers on alert, but we have rockets on alert."⁴³

In the light of the revised U.S. estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, the reintroduction of manned bombers into Soviet strategic claims gave the impression, not of an addition to strategic power, but rather of an attempt by Moscow to use bombers to fill the gap between the large ICBM capability it previously claimed and the small force with which it was now credited by the West. Moreover, the Soviet admission of continued reliance on manned bombers effected a qualitative change in previously projected Soviet claims regarding the U.S.-Soviet weapons balance. Previously, the Soviet leaders had sought to portray the strategic situation as essentially a confrontation of a large U.S. bomber force, which was, however, vulnerable to Soviet air defenses, and a large Soviet ICBM force, which was invulnerable to existing means of defense. To depreciate the strategic value of the large U.S. bomber force, the Soviet leaders depreciated the value of manned bombers in general, including their own much smaller force. But the new U.S. intelligence estimates changed the basis of Soviet declaratory policy. If American leaders now realized that manned bombers, four years after the Sputnik, still constituted the main Soviet intercontinental strategic force, it became essential to emphasize that Soviet bombers could get through in the event of war. The Soviet leaders now ostensibly justified their renewed confidence in bombers by claiming and displaying a standoff cruise missile capability,⁴⁴ although they certainly were aware that the United States had already equipped much of its B-52 force with cruise missiles (Hound Dogs).

⁴¹ *Pravda*, October 18, 1961.

⁴² *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 16, 1961.

⁴³ Report to the Supreme Soviet, May 5, 1960, *Pravda*, May 6, 1960.

⁴⁴ The argument was spelled out by *Red Star* on November 18, 1961, in an interview with Colonel General of the Engineering-Technical Service, A. N. Ponomarev: "Rockets of the air-to-ground class... are weapons of bomber aircraft. Such rockets are equipped with a propulsion unit and capable of developing great speeds independent of the speed of the aircraft which launched them. Thus the bomber not only need not enter the anti-air defense zone of the target, but need not even approach it. Its task is only to bring the rocket to a prearranged point. It is clear that under these circumstances the vulnerability of the carrying plane will be considerably reduced." (Italics supplied.)

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SOVIET SUPERBOMBS: MORE BANG FROM FEWER ICBM'S

American press reports concerning the revised U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities and the appearance of related high-level administration statements on the strategic balance coincided roughly with the Soviet announcement (August 30, 1961) that the USSR had "worked out designs for creating a series of superpowerful nuclear bombs of 20, 30 and 50 and 100 million tons of TNT" and with the detonation of thermonuclear devices with estimated yields up to 58 megatons during the Soviet test series in the fall. Although the Soviet leaders' decision to develop and test these high-yield devices clearly antedated the U.S. intelligence reappraisal in the summer of 1961, the superbombs were to play a prominent role in the Soviet response to American claims that grew out of the reappraisal. Indirectly, the superbombs were exploited to lessen the effects of leaked U.S. estimates that the Soviet ICBM force was quite small. Had there been no dramatic change in American intelligence estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities, Khrushchev might have exploited the new Soviet superbombs as a counter to the hardened U.S. ICBM facilities that were becoming operational at that time. There has been no reference, however, in Soviet sources to the superior effectiveness of these high-yield weapons in attacks on hardened military targets. The only "hardened" targets that the Soviet leaders have threatened with 50- and 100-megaton weapons are *people* protected by shelters! As Marshal Malinovsky stated in *Pravda*:

What sensible person does not realize that an atomic or hydrogen bomb shelter is nothing but a ready-made coffin or grave? Who can fail to see that, with modern, present-day weapons, no shelter can offer salvation from the nuclear bomb? It is impossible to tide it over in some bunker even if hermetically sealed, if atomic and hydrogen bombs are exploded whose destructive power reaches tens, hundreds, and even more millions of tons of TNT. . . .⁴⁸

On the whole, Soviet political exploitation of its super-high-yield thermonuclear weapons seems designed to support the claim of a powerful retaliatory force, despite the availability of relatively few intercontinental delivery vehicles, by multiplying the destructive capacity of each carrier. The tendency to shift the focus from the quantity of rocket carriers to the destructive power of their nuclear cargoes was illustrated in September 1961, when Khrushchev remarked to Sulzberger that "*several* such superpowerful bombs at our disposal will considerably increase the defense capacity of our country. . . ."⁴⁹ In a speech in December Khrushchev referred to 50- and 100-megaton Soviet bombs as "a sword of Damocles" that would "hang over the heads of the imperialists when they decide the question whether or not they should unleash war."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Pravda*, January 25, 1962.

⁴⁹ *Pravda*, September 9, 1961. (Italics supplied.)

⁵⁰ *Pravda*, December 9, 1961.

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It is noteworthy that Marshal Malinovsky, when he asserted at the XXII CPSU Congress that U.S. specialists had underestimated the level of damage the USSR could inflict on the United States, cited as the source of their alleged error the fact that they had taken as a unit for their calculations only a 5-megaton warhead. But "as you already know," he went on, "we have nuclear charges equivalent to several tens of thousands and up to 100 million tons of TNT, and our ballistic rockets have proved to be so splendid no one can have any doubt as to their ability to lift and deliver such charges to any point on earth."²¹

The compensatory effect that the Soviet leaders sought to achieve with their superbombs was exemplified in a convenient American newspaper article, which was cited in *Red Star* by Colonel General V. F. Tolubko of the Rocket Troops:

The New York Mirror, for example, bitterly noted on October 19: "Tremendous Russian rockets can deliver to targets warheads with a nuclear charge of eight to ten megatons; that is, four or five times more than the nuclear firepower of the Atlas, the biggest rocket in the American arsenal." The conclusion of the paper sounds very pessimistic: "The Soviet Union needs only 50 rockets to destroy all the large cities in the United States while the American rocket bases are still not protected and can be destroyed by enemy fire within 30 minutes after the beginning of a war. . . ."²²

ICBM'S: QUALITATIVE SUPERIORITY AND QUANTITATIVE "SUFFICIENCY"

The recent muting of Soviet claims of strategic superiority, the expressed readiness of Soviet leaders to accept strategic parity as the basis for East-West negotiations, the scaling down of their claims regarding the level of damage that the USSR could inflict on the United States in the event of war, and the new emphasis they have placed on superbombs, manned bombers, and nuclear submarines, all appear implicitly to acknowledge that the old claims of strategic superiority, which relied exclusively on the Soviet ICBM force, are no longer credible. Nevertheless, Soviet leaders have not explicitly addressed themselves to the recent U.S. estimates of Soviet ICBM capabilities reported in the Western press. This reticence contrasts with the practice in previous years, when the Russians responded directly to Western prodding regarding the numerical strength of the Soviet ICBM force (see pp. 13-14, 24-25). Moreover, other Western assertions about Soviet strategic capabilities have been refuted. Thus, Soviet leaders have said that U.S. specialists underestimated both the number and the power of Soviet nuclear weapons;²³ that the United States is wrong to doubt that Soviet scientists have created a rocket capable of delivering a 50-megaton warhead;²⁴ and

²¹ *Pravda*, October 24, 1961.

²² *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 18, 1961.

²³ See, for example, Malinovsky's speech to the XXII Party Congress, *Pravda*, October 25, 1961.

²⁴ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 18, 1961.

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that the results of Soviet ICBM and IRBM practice in operational launchings in 1961 disprove the contentions of Western observers that Soviet rockets would not perform as well in combat as they had in the Soviet space and missile test programs.⁵⁵ Attempting to refute the last allegations, Marshal Malinovsky stated that over 90 per cent of all MRBM practice launchings in 1961 scored "excellent" or "good," and that all ICBM firings were similarly graded. (He did not indicate the absolute number of launchings.) A similar effort to create the impression of a large strategic missile force is apparent in an announcement Malinovsky made at the XXII CPSU Congress: "I think it will be of interest to delegates to the Congress to learn that at the present time the Rocket Troops include about 1,800 subunits graded excellent; these are great masters of their craft, masters of hitting any point on the globe without a miss." Although the ratio of "subunits" of Rocket Troops to operational strategic rockets, and particularly ICBM's, in the Soviet force is not known, the number given for the "excellent subunits" is impressively large and has been used repeatedly in Soviet propaganda on the might of Soviet rocket forces. (See pp. 76-77.)

Similarly, a felt need to provide some "tangible" evidence of Soviet strategic rocket capabilities may also have been the motive for the frequent publication since the end of 1961 of photographs of objects stated to be operational Soviet missiles. Most of the photographs are of SAM's and short-range surface-to-surface missiles.⁵⁶ Photographs of what appear to be Shyster (700 nautical miles) or Sandal (1100 nautical miles) missiles have also occasionally been published.⁵⁷ The subject of one such photograph was identified as an "intercontinental rocket."⁵⁸ Related to these photographic displays have been eyewitness reports by Soviet newspaper correspondents after visits to Soviet "rocket bases" and missile-launching submarines.⁵⁹

Current claims about the numerical strength of the Soviet ICBM force speak of "sufficient" or "necessary" numbers. This formulation appears to have been incorporated into the Soviet Army Day ritual in 1961, when Marshal Moskalenko wrote: "At [the Soviet Union's] disposal are a sufficient number of rockets for various purposes which are the best in the world, and powerful and super-powerful nuclear weapons of various classes."⁶⁰ Similarly, according to Marshal Bagramyan: "In the Soviet Union, this armament [rocket

⁵⁵ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 15, 1961.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, November 19, 1961, January 25, February 21, 23, and 25, 1962; *Pravda*, December 21, 1961, and February 23, 1962.

⁵⁷ See, for example, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, October 18 and November 10, 1961, and January 25, 1962.

⁵⁸ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 21, 1962.

⁵⁹ See *Izvestia*, October 10, 1961, for a correspondent's account of a trip aboard a Soviet nuclear submarine. TASS (February 20, 1962) transmitted a report on a correspondent's visit to a rocket base at which he was not shown ICBM's but their "sisters" or "little sisters."

⁶⁰ *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, February 23, 1961.

weapons with nuclear warheads] is represented in sufficient numbers by ballistic rockets for various purposes . . . including intercontinental rockets of practically unlimited range."⁶¹

At the XXII CPSU Congress Marshal Malinovsky introduced a modification of the "sufficiency" formula that may have reflected Soviet sensitivity on the question of operational ICBM capability. Malinovsky specified that the Rocket Troops had the necessary quantity of "launching *installations*, rockets, and charges of multimillion-ton power."⁶² This formula is in effect a truncated version of Khrushchev's January 1960 claim, which asserted that the USSR had enough rockets to "wipe from the earth all of its potential enemies"; the post-1960 formula either says nothing about the purposes for which the number of rockets is "sufficient" or "necessary" (as in the Moskalenko and Bagramyan statements above) or, in other variations, asserts only that they are sufficient to "rout" an enemy or to administer a "due rebuff."

In another, weaker, variant of the formulation, only the quantity of nuclear weapons possessed by the USSR is termed "sufficient," while the missile portion of the claim is expressed in strictly qualitative terms:

[The Soviet armed forces] have the necessary number of thermonuclear weapons, the most perfect means of delivery—short- and medium-range rockets and intercontinental rockets. . . . [Khrushchev, *Pravda*, July 9, 1961.]

The Soviet Union has at its disposal not only sufficient stockpiles of the mightiest nuclear weapons in the world, but also the most modern means of delivering them to target. ["Observer," *Pravda*, March 31, 1962.]

Emphasis on the *qualitative superiority* of Soviet weapons and on Soviet primacy in *developing new weapons* have become dominant themes in the Soviet leaders' statements on military affairs. Thus, Marshal Moskalenko has written that "there are no such intercontinental or other types of rockets in the world today as are now in the armament of the Soviet Army" and that Soviet weapons are "the *most modern* in the world."⁶³ Marshal Biriuzov boasted: "We have the *best* weapons, including rockets."⁶⁴ Marshal Malinovsky asserted in May 1962 that the USSR could more than hold its own in "competition for quality of armaments":

Our country possesses perfect military equipment, fully answering the tasks of ensuring defense in contemporary conditions. In the competition for quality of weapons imposed on us by the aggressive forces, we not only do not lag behind those who threaten us with war, but in many respects are even superior to them. In the future, if the arms race is not brought to an end, this superiority will grow."⁶⁵

⁶¹ *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, February 23, 1961.

⁶² *Pravda*, October 25, 1961. (Italics supplied.)

⁶³ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 13, 1961. (Italics supplied.)

⁶⁴ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, September 23, 1961. (Italics supplied.)

⁶⁵ *Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1962.

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The "global rocket," whose creation by Soviet scientists was first announced by Khrushchev in his Moscow pre-election speech of March 16, 1962, was quickly offered as evidence of Soviet superiority in developing intercontinental missiles. It also provided the basis for new claims regarding the invulnerability, both in flight and on the ground, of Soviet ICBM's. It was implied that henceforth it would be more difficult for U.S. intelligence to find the location of Soviet ICBM launchers:

If formerly the approximate location of Soviet rocket installations could be determined from knowledge of the shortest line for bombarding American territory, now these calculations are useless. The launching pads for global rockets can be located in practically any part of the vast Soviet territory, and rockets can fly to their targets from any direction.⁶⁶

In a recent statement Marshal V. Sokolovsky declared that the vastness of the country permits the USSR "to locate and to shelter"⁶⁷ its rocket-nuclear means so that they remain invulnerable to reconnaissance and to the enemy's strategic means of attack.⁶⁸

During his October 17 report to the XXII Congress, delivered a month after reports began to appear in the American press that U.S. intelligence estimates credited the USSR with fewer than fifty ICBM's, Khrushchev made the following announcement: "Permit me to report to the Congress that the rearmament of the Soviet army"⁶⁹ with rocket and nuclear equipment is completely finished. Our armed forces now have at their disposal such powerful weapons as enable them to crush any aggressor."⁷⁰ Khrushchev specified neither types nor quantities of rockets, but insofar as his announcement covered the Soviet ICBM force it can be reconciled with U.S. intelligence estimates of mid-1961 Soviet ICBM capabilities only if it is interpreted as an announcement that the deployment of the few programmed SS-6 missiles had been completed. That this deployment was in fact completed by October 1961 is indicated by U.S. intelligence estimates, but the force thus created was only a token one. Khrushchev, on the other hand, clearly intended his announcement to convey the im-

⁶⁶"Observer," *Pravda*, March 31, 1962.

⁶⁷*U'evir*: to cover, conceal, shelter, but not necessarily in the sense of hardening.

⁶⁸*Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 19, 1962.

⁶⁹The word "army" (*armiya*) is used in Russian to denote both the sum total of the armed forces of a state, as in the passage above where it is employed interchangeably with "armed forces," and, more narrowly, to signify ground forces, as in the expression, "the Soviet Army, Navy, and Air Force."

⁷⁰Khrushchev's announcement had been anticipated eight months earlier by Marshal Sokolovsky, who was quoted in a TASS interview on February 20, 1961, as having said that the Soviet Army and Navy "have completed reorganization and re-equipment with new weapons." (Italics supplied.) Yet five months later Defense Minister Malinovsky was still speaking of conversion to rocket weapons as an ongoing process: "Most important is the fact that all branches of our Armed Forces are converting to rocket weapons." (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 8, 1961, italics supplied.) Khrushchev had not previously intimated the "completion" of the re-equipment program was imminent. In August he was still speaking only of the creation of various kinds of rocket equipment for the armed forces and, in denying the necessity to allocate additional funds for missiles, he said, "our rocket effort is moving along well." (*Pravda*, August 8, 1961.)

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pression that large numbers of rockets of various types had become operational. The discrepancy between the limited number of SS-6 missiles now estimated to have been deployed and Soviet claims that serial production commenced as early as January 1959 may be accounted for by Marshal Malinovsky's intimation at the XXII Congress that more rockets (types unspecified) had actually been produced than had been expended or deployed.⁷¹ In his *Pravda* interview on January 25, 1962, Malinovsky emphasized that the Soviet Union has "no particular need to increase the rocket forces or weapon stockpiles." "At the present time," he said, "we no longer need to build up the quantity of weapons. Those we have are sufficient to defeat any potential enemy who attacked us or the socialist countries friendly to us." But Malinovsky also stated:

The process now will no longer be one of stockpiling weapons, but of their *natural renewal and improvement*. For any weapon, however perfect, can be further improved with the development of the economy and advances in science and military technology. . . . We shall need only to renew and perfect the weapons we have. [Italics supplied.]

This statement is consistent with recent evidence that the USSR has already begun the deployment of the lighter weight, less cumbersome SS-7, which uses storable liquid propellants. Testing of this ICBM began early in 1961. An intensive firing schedule, marked initially by an unusually large number of failures, culminated in full-range firings to the Pacific Ocean impact area in the fall of 1961. The pace of the SS-7 program has been much more intensive than that of the SS-6: More missiles were launched in the first year of the SS-7 test program than in the first two years of the SS-6 program. In January 1962 alone there were five firings of the SS-7 missile. But Malinovsky implied that improved weapons would enter the Soviet force only in the quantity necessary to replace older models. ("At the present time we no longer need to build up the quantity of weapons . . . we shall need only to renew [*obnovliat'*: to replace with something new] and perfect the weapons we have.")

In January 1962 Malinovsky's statement could be reconciled with U.S. estimates of current Soviet ICBM capabilities only if it were assumed that the USSR planned to deploy very limited numbers of the new SS-7 missile, that is, enough to replace the token force of SS-6's deployed earlier. By mid-1962, however, it was estimated that the number of SS-7's already made operational substantially exceeded the total number of SS-6 missiles that had been previously deployed.

⁷¹ *Pravda*, October 25, 1961. "I must report to you that the volume of the output of rocket armaments in recent years has increased to such an extent that we are not only completely supplied with rockets of various types and missions, but we have a large surplus."

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Part Three

VII. THE RHETORIC OF SOVIET STRATEGIC DECEPTION:
1957-1962

BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF DECEPTION

SINCE 1957 the Soviet leaders, principally Khrushchev and some top military figures, have practiced deliberate, systematic, and sustained strategic deception. In this study the targets of the deception have usually been identified in such general terms as "the U.S.," "the West," and "neutral opinion," and have been specified only when there is reason to believe that a particular audience was meant to be influenced in special ways by a particular claim. The reason for this is that deceptive Soviet ICBM claims were meant to serve a variety of purposes and to influence the beliefs and behavior of a whole range of audiences. In a general sense, the target of Soviet missile deception was world opinion at large, including certain groups in the Soviet Union itself. Although the Soviet leaders might have preferred to convey certain impressions to particular audiences and not to others, or to convey different impressions to different audiences, the requirements of internal logic and systematic exposition in an age of world-wide communications place severe limitations on their freedom to tailor deceptive claims to achieve such diversified effects. Although the Soviet leaders have effective control over the content of Soviet communications, they cannot control their dissemination outside the USSR and the countries subservient to it, nor can they limit their impact exclusively to preferred target audiences. Thus, the price for attempting to achieve the desired effect on one audience may be the risk that the same message will have an undesirable effect elsewhere. For example, to achieve the desired political effect on Western and neutral audiences, the Soviet leaders made ICBM claims that encouraged their restless Chinese allies to press for new Soviet commitments that the USSR was evidently reluctant to give. Similarly, the effects on a single audience, or on influential groups within a single society, may be ambivalent. Thus, the Soviet leaders found that in addition to the favorable political consequences that flowed from their success in misleading U.S. opinion regarding the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program, there were also undesirable consequences.

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namely, stimulation of U.S. arms programs. Some unfavorable consequences may have been anticipated; others may not have been, or their extent may have been underestimated. The Soviet leaders may also have had exaggerated expectations regarding the political benefits that would accrue from successful deception. It is apparent, at any rate, that in undertaking to engage in deception, the Soviet leaders calculated, rightly or wrongly, that acceptance of the costs and risks that might be involved was warranted by expected gains.

Ultimately, the chief objective of the Soviet leaders was to influence the policies of Western, and particularly U.S. decisionmakers, in ways that favored Soviet interests. Given the nature of the political process in Western societies and within the Western alliance as a whole, the conduct of the cold war by Western leaders can be affected without actually changing the beliefs of the leaders. This reflects one of the fundamental differences between the two systems engaged in the struggle. To influence communist policy in the cold war means to influence the small circle of rulers in Moscow (and now, perhaps, also in Peking); but it is possible to influence the West's policy by persuading the governments, parties or peoples allied to the United States, as well as influential groups in America itself. The Communists can bring pressure and propaganda to bear at many more points than the West, because all the groups mentioned, as well as articulate opinion in neutral countries, can make their influence felt in Washington.

Although these indirect means of influencing the policies of U.S. and allied governments were available to the Soviet leaders and were actively exploited in the ICBM deception, more rapid and far-reaching effects could be achieved by directly influencing the estimates and beliefs of the U.S. President and his advisers. The Soviet leaders attempted to do this not only by pointed assertions given world-wide dissemination, but also in private conversations with U.S. diplomats and political leaders, including Vice-President Nixon, Senator Humphrey, and Governor Harriman. Assertions about Soviet ICBM capabilities were also made in private conversations with allied diplomats and leaders. These conversations were not publicized by Soviet media, although it could be presumed that they would be made known to the U.S. administration. As the reader has seen, Soviet leaders closely observed the reaction of U.S. officials to their missile claims, commented on it, and, when disbelief was expressed, sought to dispel it.

Clearly, the Soviet ICBM deception achieved its greatest success among groups that did not have full access to the relevant information that the West did possess. But even within the U.S. intelligence community, mistaken beliefs about the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program persisted for more than four years after the first Soviet ICBM test. In fact, the possibility that the Soviet Union might be engaging in a "crash" ICBM program was not rejected until more than mid-way in this period, long after the Soviet leaders had decided

to deploy only a token force of SS-6 missiles. (Secretary Gates, February 9, 1960.)¹ Moreover, subsequent estimates assumed that the USSR was engaged in "a vigorous but orderly ICBM program," as Secretary Gates called it in February 1960. It was supposed that the Soviet Union succeeded in acquiring an initial operational capability in January 1960 that increased steadily, so that by mid-1960 several dozen ICBM's were operational and a far greater number by mid-1961. Actually, the highly confident estimates after September 1961 finally credited the USSR with no more than a token force for 1961.

Although the targets of Soviet deception since 1957 have varied along with its methods, aims, and extent, strategic deception has not been an incidental means of promoting Soviet policy but an integral part of that policy. Its object was not simply to compensate for an unavoidable, adverse imbalance in strategic power, but also probably to conceal from the West that the Soviet ICBM force programmed for the period 1958-1962 would not close the gap and might even permit it to widen substantially.

The Soviet decision to deploy only a handful of SS-6 ICBM's, which had been taken by mid-1958, may have been made with the intention of seeking to deceive the West regarding the Soviet operational ICBM capability in the period from 1958 to 1962, at the end of which the SS-7 ICBM would presumably become operational in substantial numbers. The aim of this deception was not simply to deter the West by gaining credit for a capability to deliver thermonuclear weapons against the United States that was comparable to SAC's capability against the USSR, although this may have been the original intention. In practice, the Soviet leaders often sought to widen the scope of deception far beyond this. Thus, the SAC bomber force was severely depreciated while the USSR claimed a missile force that could wipe any hostile country from the face of the earth, although it possessed no such missile force at the time. Various forms of strategic superiority were claimed to intimidate the West and to elicit concessions from it. The effort to deceive was intended not merely to deter an attack on the Soviet Union but to secure political gains as well.

The scope of Soviet deception fluctuated widely. When the West seemed highly uncertain regarding the Soviet ICBM program's progress, when the Soviet space program achieved spectacular successes, or when domestic or foreign political exigencies required it, Moscow's strategic claims were correspondingly inflated and its threats became more ominous. When the West demonstrated confidence in a limited estimate of Soviet missile capabilities against the United States, Soviet missile claims were directed to the relatively modest aim of gaining credit for an assured capacity to retaliate against the United States,

¹Hearings, p. 442.

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DECEPTION IN SOVIET STRATEGIC MISSILE CLAIMS

In the period 1957-1961, conditions favored the Soviet attempts to deceive the West regarding strategic capabilities. Western leaders and their advisers were susceptible to the kind of strategic deception practiced by their Soviet opponents. The size and effectiveness of Soviet strategic capabilities were matters of vital concern in the West. But uncertainties surrounded even the best estimates available to Western leaders. For most of this period, the crucial uncertainty had to do not with the ICBM force that had become operational at any given moment but rather with the Soviet *program* for deploying the ICBM, in particular the SS-6. Presumably, the Soviet leaders, when they decided to engage in strategic deception, were confident that they could preserve secrecy concerning the true state of the program and the actual number of ICBM sites being constructed. Their confidence was probably considerable, for they doubtless realized that if the deception were discovered, the Soviet ICBM force could not be expanded rapidly, because of long lead times for site building and missile installation. No doubt the Soviet leaders believed that the risk of a U.S. attack was small and could be controlled by political means; yet they must have been apprehensive of the fact that in an emergency their false missile claims could be made good only after a substantial interval.

Because the West was uncertain regarding the Soviet program for deploying SS-6 ICBM's, it was compelled to treat seriously what the Soviet leaders chose to reveal about their ICBM plans. The West's predicament was certainly known in Moscow. Persistent Western attacks on Soviet secrecy after 1957, however valuable their political effects on neutral third parties, had served to demonstrate the Western thirst for intelligence. Aware of this need, the Soviet leaders were able to make a probing assertion about their ICBM program, observe the West's reaction to it, comment on this reaction, and reinforce the original claim by new assertions. A whole range of verbal tricks was employed to mislead Western opinion by playing on its uncertainty. At the same time enough of what the Soviet leaders claimed was in accord with what was known or believed in the West that it was not possible simply to discount what the Soviet leaders claimed. Their assertions had to be examined in the light of what was known, but because so much was unknown it was difficult to disprove what was claimed. The aura of mystery that surrounded the question of Soviet strategic capabilities in the West was beneficial to Soviet designs, and the Soviet leaders sought to maintain it even while lifting the veil from time to time. Khrushchev constantly referred to Soviet "secrets," occasionally revealing something of their substance in private audiences with Westerners or in public speeches, at other times merely affirming their existence, as when he alluded to designs for "fantastic new weapons" in the portfolios of his scientists.²

² *Pravda*, January 15, 1960.

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Faced with large uncertainties regarding questions of vital concern, many in the West were predisposed to expect the worst, namely, that the Soviet Union would rapidly acquire a substantial intercontinental strategic force. This expectation was based on an understanding of Soviet intentions then current among Western leaders and their advisers; on the strategic requirements that were believed to guide Soviet military policy; and on a new appreciation of Soviet technical capabilities. The last was largely the product of the unexpectedly rapid progress of Soviet rocket technology as demonstrated in the USSR's highly successful space program, which became an integral part of the deception. The space program afforded Soviet leaders an opportunity to stage a sustained and nonprovocative military demonstration.³ To the West, it seemed to confirm some of Khrushchev's key ICBM claims and provided the basis, together with important intelligence on the Soviet research and development programs, for estimates of what the Soviet Union was technologically capable of doing in the field of strategic missiles.

Soviet space feats, of course, were meant to impress the whole world, but the West's intelligence-collecting agencies were an important part of that world. If impressing the world with Soviet scientific and potential military prowess meant revealing some secrets to the opponent, the Soviet leaders showed themselves ready on numerous occasions to accept the cost. Soviet ICBM tests were extensively monitored by U.S. ground and airborne facilities almost from their inception. These facilities presumably could have been interfered with, had it been thought necessary to incur the material and political costs of measures serving this purpose. Forceful measures were taken in connection with the U-2 incident and the subsequent RB-47 incident to deprive the West of information regarding the Soviet ICBM's *deployment*, but similar measures are not known to have been taken to prevent the West from eliciting information by monitoring Soviet *flight tests*. In any case, the Soviet leaders showed themselves willing to tolerate the West's monitoring activities.

The toleration of monitoring devices that might have been interfered with, as well as the effort expended on the space program and the political use made of it, were important ways of supporting Soviet deceptive claims; taken together they provide a measure of the Soviet effort not only to impress the West but to deceive it. Now, it has been argued, however, that a serious Soviet effort to deceive would *necessarily* have required the use of positive physical measures of deception, such as the construction of dummy ICBM sites, simulated training test shots, and spurious electronic signals. As regards the Soviet *development* program, however, there might not have been a great deal gained—at least after the resump-

³See A. L. Horelick, *The Soviet Union and the Political Uses of Outer Space*, The RAND Corporation, P-2180, November 1961, for a detailed analysis of the USSR's exploitation of its space program to bolster the missile claims of its leaders.

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tion of intensive testing in January 1959—by fabricating evidence bearing on the test program, because the actual program disclosed by the West's monitoring activities indicated that the Soviet development program was indeed making good progress and promised to result in the deployment of a substantial ICBM force. Moreover, serious difficulties would have attended the use of fabricated evidence of *deployment*, such as the construction of dummy sites. Since the United States credited the Soviet Union with an operational ICBM force despite the failure to identify positively a single site, the discovery of a few dummy sites, even if accepted as genuine, would probably not have significantly influenced the U.S. estimate of the current Soviet ICBM force. Worse yet, elements of the intelligence community might have argued that the sites discovered were the only ones that the USSR possessed. To overcome this difficulty would have required the construction of large numbers of dummy sites, which in turn would have considerably increased the likelihood that they would be recognized as spurious. Although the Soviet leaders did not do everything they might have done to carry through the deception, their efforts were great nonetheless.

The reputation that the Soviet Union acquired as a result of the capabilities demonstrated by the space program provided Soviet leaders with a reservoir of credibility on which to draw for purposes of strategic deception. The reservoir was regularly replenished by new and more spectacular Soviet space ventures.

A reputation for credibility, however, is not simply something to enjoy, but something to use. The Soviet leaders sought to use their credit as a basis for deception to secure political advantage. Because credibility is a fragile asset, easily dissipated, caution is called for in exploiting it. A military claim by one side will be measured by the other against what he already knows and believes; if the discrepancy is too great, the claim will be discounted. Thus, to persuade the opponent that one's forces are greater than he supposes requires that the margin claimed should not be excessive. Generally, but not always, the Soviet leaders observed this maxim.

Caution was enjoined for another reason. The Soviet leaders faced the risk, however they estimated it, that ultimately their deception would be exposed, either wholly or in part. Exposure might seriously discredit them and thus diminish their future capacity not only to deceive their opponents, but even perhaps to communicate crucial information. This risk did not deter them from engaging in strategic deception on a large scale, but it conditioned their choice of deceptive techniques. They generally avoided explicit falsehoods of a kind that, even if not susceptible to immediate refutation, might be proved false in the near future. Soviet acceptance of this restraint, in order to minimize future losses in credibility, prevented the full exploitation of opportunities for exaggerating Soviet strategic capabilities.

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The most inflated claims of the Soviet leaders pertained to questions that were largely matters of judgment, such as the consequences of thermonuclear war and the over-all strategic balance, defined grossly. These claims *implied* the possession of very large operational strategic forces without actually asserting it. It was left to Western observers to make the logically correct, but factually false, inference. Such claims, however inflated, are not directly refutable even if the unstated premise is challenged. Thus, Khrushchev, faced recently with sharp challenges to the credibility of his previous claims regarding the strategic balance, defended them by redefining the concept of strategic balance to make it more inclusive:

The U.S. circles... have not the slightest basis for maintaining that the balance of forces has changed to their advantage. It is commonly known that a balance of power is measured while military operations are in progress and above all by the outcome of a war. Hitler, who kept maintaining that he had an overwhelming preponderance of forces, was finally completely smashed by the Soviet Union and its allies.⁴

As a rule when a claim lent itself to generalized and vague expression (for example, one concerning "the balance of forces"), the advantage claimed for the Soviet Union tended to be pronounced and stated explicitly. On the other hand, deceptive claims regarding more concrete and specific subjects (for example, weapon systems) were expressed ambiguously. Qualitative claims were preferred, quantitative ones usually avoided. Repetition was employed frequently, both to emphasize claims, and to gain their acceptance by conditioning the target audiences. If the reiterated claim went unchallenged, silence was interpreted as assent, and soon the strategic advantage claimed for the USSR was said to be one "well known" or "admitted in the West." The statements of Western authorities, both officials and private citizens, were employed as supporting evidence. The Soviet leaders sometimes quoted Western sources that credited the USSR with even more than they themselves had claimed.

The logical progression of Soviet claims, particularly those regarding the production status of the ICBM, as well as the internal consistency of the claims made possible by tight official control of Soviet communications media, were also employed to induce credibility.

VERBAL TECHNIQUES OF DECEPTION

Three principal devices were employed to deceive the West regarding Soviet intercontinental strategic forces: falsehood, ambiguity, and specious reasoning. They were used in varied and subtle ways and in various combinations. In what follows, therefore, the same claim sometimes illustrates more than one of these techniques.

⁴Pravda, July 11, 1962.

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Falsehood

A number of Soviet claims are now believed on good evidence to have been false when made, and their falsity known to the claimants. It is important to distinguish within this class, however, between assertions that, although known to be false when made, were expected to become true in the near future, and those that were simply fabrications. The first group, anticipations of future capabilities, although they often involved facile resolution of future uncertainties, were firmly based on present facts and could have reflected future plans. Fabrications, on the other hand, were not only without foundation but often went counter to actual plans.

The crucial moment separating the use of the two kinds of falsehood came in 1958, when it is believed that a decision was made to deploy no more than a handful of SS-6 ICBM's. Subsequent assertions regarding an imminent or existing intercontinental missile capability of large proportions were largely colored by falsehood, at least until deployment of the second-generation ICBM (SS-7) was initiated in 1962.

In the period prior to mid-1958, false Soviet ICBM claims were basically anticipatory. Khrushchev made the first false claim by disregarding qualifications in the original TASS announcement on the status of the Soviet ICBM. These falsifications were conveyed in a series of interviews with Western correspondents in late 1957. Khrushchev said, for example, that "the Soviet Union possesses intercontinental rockets," although the USSR had not yet successfully tested essential components of its ICBM, including the re-entry vehicle.³ He may similarly have falsified when he said, "On the very first try our rocket *hit* the target,"⁴ for the two ICBM's tested apparently failed to penetrate the atmosphere. Assuming that he knew of the important work that remained to be done before the USSR would actually possess a developed weapon system, Khrushchev's statement that the USSR "possesses" an ICBM was false when made, but correctly anticipated developments of the following months, when the USSR actually achieved the complete weapon system that he had previously claimed. These anticipatory falsifications sometimes relied on a highly flexible "now" to mislead the West. For example, Khrushchev said in November 1957, "intercontinental ballistic missiles *now* make it possible to hit a target in any area of the globe," yet it is estimated that the Soviet ICBM literally could not hit a target, because it could not penetrate the atmosphere (an ICBM re-entry vehicle was not successfully tested until the spring of 1958): but the

³TASS, November 29, 1957.

⁴*Pravda*, November 19, 1957. (Italics supplied.)

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statement became applicable later, and at the time Khrushchev spoke he could reasonably expect such a development.⁷

The word "possess" was also used loosely to anticipate a future capability, and not only by Khrushchev. Defense Minister Malinovsky said on Armed Forces Day, 1958: "The Soviet Armed Forces have rockets of . . . super-long range," that is, ICBM's; this was at a time when the ICBM had not been fully developed and could in no sense be considered operational.⁸ Other top marshals aped their chief on this same occasion. In February 1959, when the USSR was still a year away from an initial operational capability with the SS-6 missile, Marshals Malinovsky and Moskalenko claimed that the armed forces had been "equipped" with ICBM's. Although this claim was closer in time to the actual achievement of an IOC than the earlier vague claims that the USSR "possessed" ICBM's, its more precise language made it blatantly false. In mid-1960 Khrushchev made an anticipatory claim, from which important intelligence information was elicited, when he said that rockets with ranges of 2000 to 4000 kilometers might be used to attack U.S. overseas bases in the event of war.⁹ Although a missile with a range of about 4000 kilometers had been successfully developed, it was not flight-tested until several days later (June 6, 1960), and not deployed for more than a year afterward. Nevertheless, the claim revealed what was not yet known in the West, that such a missile was under development.

The second group of false claims may be termed fabrications because when made there was no reason to suppose that they would become true in the near future. The chief instance was Khrushchev's claim that the USSR "already" had sufficient missiles and nuclear weapons literally to wipe any country from the face of the earth. This was said on January 14, 1960, when the USSR had very few missiles capable of reaching the United States and might even have found it difficult to strike this country with a missile at all. Moreover, there was no immediate prospect that such a capability would be achieved because a decision to deploy only a few first-generation ICBM's had been taken long before (in 1958), and the second-generation ICBM was not to become operational for two more years.¹⁰

In the same speech Khrushchev also claimed falsely that ICBM's of various types were in "mass production," a formulation that, unlike the earlier one regarding "serial production," unequivocally refers to production of operational ICBM's, and not primarily of vehicles

⁷TASS, November 29, 1957. Another instance of this expansive "now": "I think it is no secret that there *now* exists a range of missiles with the aid of which it is possible to fulfill any assignment of operational and strategic importance." (*International Affairs*, November 1957. Italics supplied.)

⁸*Krasnaya Zvezda*, February 22, 1958.

⁹*Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

¹⁰*Pravda*, January 23, 1962.

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for research and development. Nevertheless, Khrushchev's fabrication was quoted by several top marshals.

A more recent fabrication was Defense Minister Malinovsky's statement that the USSR had "no particular need to increase the rocket forces or weapon stockpiles. . . . The process will no longer be one of stockpiling weapons, but of their natural renewal and improvement. . . . We shall need only to renew and perfect the weapons we have."¹¹ The implication that the number of missiles, presumably including ICBM's, would remain constant is contradicted by the fact that only a small number of first-generation ICBM's was available when the statement was made, although a substantially larger number of the second-generation ICBM was deployed in the following months.

Ambiguity

Ambiguous terms have been employed to convey vague or equivocal claims. To give them a definite meaning, an interpreter of such statements must resolve the ambiguity. Moscow has sometimes simply relied on the West's predisposition to resolve ambiguities in the direction of exaggerating Soviet intercontinental strategic capabilities, although it has also used special devices to bring about this result. Such complementary means have included placing the ambiguous claim in a misleading context or in a contrived temporal series (for example, in the progression of ICBM production claims) so as to favor resolution of the ambiguity in the sense preferred by the USSR.

Ambiguity is the most flexible device available for making deceptive claims about strategic capabilities and has been the chief one employed. Several types can usefully be distinguished, including metaphor, heterogeneous aggregates, and vague expressions.

Metaphors. When used in strategic claims, metaphors are peculiarly dependent for their effectiveness on the predisposition of the intended audience to accept such claims, as well as on the context and situation in which they are presented. The principal example of the Soviet use of metaphor is the phrase "wipe from the face of the earth," which was used to characterize Soviet missile capabilities against any country hostile to the USSR. Previously, this metaphor had been used to characterize Soviet missile capabilities against West Europe; but in January 1960 it was implicitly extended to cover the United States as well. There was, however, a crucial difference between the two applications. On several occasions Khrushchev and Malinovsky cited quantitative data to show how easily particular West European countries could be obliterated; this was never done with respect to the United States.

To obliterate a country like the United States from the face of the earth was manifestly beyond Soviet missile capabilities when the claim was made in 1960, although it was not

¹¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 25, 1962.

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inconceivable that a high level of damage could be inflicted. To the Western analyst the main question was: *What* level of damage did the Soviet claim imply? The burden of interpretation rested on the audience. Khrushchev did not leave it at that, however, but went to considerable pains to ensure that his claim was not simply dismissed as a wild metaphor. He asserted it on three important occasions within two months and, in his last version, seemed to be offering to assist the interpreter by removing a number of ambiguities. The final and least equivocal of the three formulations was that of January 14, 1960, but the metaphor was first used as early as November 14, 1959. The following table lists the corresponding phrases in the two formulations:¹²

November 14, 1959 (and, with slight changes, December 1, 1959)

We
now have accumulated
so many *rockets*, so many atomic and hydrogen
warheads

that if

we were attacked

we could

wipe from the face of the earth

all of our probable opponents.

January 14, 1960

I stress once again that we
already have enough
nuclear weapons—atomic and hydrogen—and the
corresponding rockets to deliver this weapon to
the territory of a possible aggressor, [so]

that if

some madman

stirred up

an attack on our state or on other socialist states

we could

literally

wipe from the face of the earth

the country or countries that attacked us.

Khrushchev was careful throughout to retain the metaphor, "wipe from the face of the earth," and in the last version he asked that it be taken "literally"! The metaphor was parroted by top military leaders when they publicly supported Khrushchev's claim.

Subsequently, when Khrushchev apparently wished to retreat from his extreme missile claim, he found it useful to retain the metaphor, "wipe from the face of the earth," as a faint reminder of the earlier claim, although now it was the "aggressors," not "hostile countries," that could be obliterated by Soviet missiles.

Heterogeneous Aggregates. In Soviet economic reporting, there is a long history of use of heterogeneous aggregates. Although they serve a legitimate purpose in Soviet statistical

¹² Italics supplied. Note the missile claim implied by introduction of the phrase "corresponding rockets." For a complete analysis of the changes in the final version, see Section IV.

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analysis, they have also been manipulated to conceal from the West the Soviet performance in producing particular commodities, and to provide a basis for exaggerated claims of broad economic progress. Heterogeneous aggregates such as annual value of machinery output are published, although the outputs of some particular kinds of machines are not. This use of economic statistics to reveal what Soviet leaders want known and to conceal what they want to hide has made it necessary for Western economists to subject aggregative figures to refined analysis in an effort to eliminate bias.

Soviet experience in the use of economic statistics to preserve secrecy and reap propaganda gains was used to advantage in the field of strategic deception. The Soviet leaders have made claims about Soviet "missiles," a term that comprises weapons for tactical and defensive use as well as for strategic offensive purposes, which might readily be interpreted as applying to ICBM's. For example, Khrushchev observed that he had visited a plant that produced in one year "250 missiles with hydrogen warheads." The missiles were not further specified, but the context suggested that ICBM's were meant, for Khrushchev had shortly before discussed the production of ICBM's.¹³ Again, in his speech to the Supreme Soviet on defense policy, Khrushchev said: "We deploy our missile complexes in such a way as to insure duplication and triplication, thereby maintaining a capacity to retaliate." The aggregative term employed, "missile complexes," was clearly meant to refer to strategic missiles, but it was not made clear whether ICBM's or IRBM's were to be understood.¹⁴

Aggregative terms were also used in statements of doubtful truth, presumably to avoid direct falsehood, or at least to increase the difficulty of exposing it. Thus, according to Khrushchev in January 1960: "Almost the entire *military air force* is being replaced by missile equipment."¹⁵ In fact, while the number of fighter planes and *medium* bombers was being reduced as missiles became available to perform their functions, the Soviet *heavy* bomber force capable of striking the United States was not being replaced by ICBM's and, as it now appears, was bound to remain the principal means of attacking the United States for at least two more years, until the new-generation ICBM (SS-7) became operational in substantial numbers.

When the Soviet leaders found it necessary or expedient to make quantitative statements about the strategic missile forces, various devices were employed to obscure their meaning. On occasion, the quantities were expressed in imprecise units. For example, in October 1961, Malinovsky told the XXII Congress that the performance of 1800 subunits of the rocket troops had been graded "excellent." Here a precise quantity is given, but two aggregative terms are employed to obscure its significance. The *subunits* referred to are not speci-

¹³ *Pravda*, November 18, 1959. In any case, missiles and hydrogen warheads are not "produced" at a single plant.

¹⁴ Here Khrushchev does supply a hint that ICBM's may not be the subject of reference, because the missile targets are "foreign military bases around the USSR." (*Pravda*, January 15, 1962.)

¹⁵ *Pravda*, January 15, 1960. (Italics supplied.)

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fied, so that the inclusion of numerous noncombatant forces cannot be ruled out. The second aggregative term employed, *rocket troops*, further complicates interpretation of Malinovsky's statement. In an earlier passage, Malinovsky had announced the creation of "Strategic rocket troops" [*Raketnye voiska strategicheskogo naznacheniia*], and then had mentioned the great successes achieved by "the rocket troops" [*raketnykh voiskakh*] in firing medium-range rockets and ICBM's. Thus, when he announced that there were 1800 excellent [*otlichnykh*] subunits in the rocket forces, the reader might be led to assume that these were elements of the strategic rocket forces. Whatever the true connotation of the phrase "rocket troops" in this statement, which was frequently cited following the congress, its employment together with "subunits" deprives the number 1800 of any definite meaning.

Vague and Indefinite Terms. When Khrushchev found it expedient to make quantitative statements about the Soviet strategic missile force, he spoke in vague terms. Some Americans "allege that the Soviet Union has but few ICBM's. . . . We can, apropos, remark that we have *enough* rockets also for America, should a war be launched against us."¹⁶ Khrushchev did not reveal the task for which the rockets were "enough," and "rockets" is in any case an aggregative term; yet because the statement was clearly meant to rebut the allegation that the Soviet Union had few ICBM's, it could be interpreted as a claim to possess a substantial ICBM force.

The words "have" or "possess" have similarly been used without a precise connotation. Thus, in a published interview with American journalists, Khrushchev declared, "The Soviet Union *possesses* ICBM's," at a time when the Soviet Union had not yet developed important components of an ICBM. (Italics supplied.) A similar verbal device was employed by top military leaders. Marshal Malinovsky announced to the highest Party assembly (XXI Congress) that the armed forces were "equipped" with ICBM's, a claim that was soon repeated by Marshals Moskalenko and Chuikov.¹⁷ According to current estimates, this assertion was made almost a full year before the USSR could have had even a small IOC with the SS-6 missile.

Specious Arguments

A third verbal device employed in Soviet strategic deception may loosely be called specious argument. Even a casual inspection often reveals that the facts Khrushchev has cited in support of a claim do little or nothing to substantiate the claim.

As a means of persuasion, this device relies on psychological association and specious logic. Its success depends on the audience's failing to exercise its critical faculties or lacking

¹⁶ *Pravda*, May 9, 1959. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁷ *Pravda*, February 5, 1959; *Sovetskaiia Rossiia*, February 23, 1959; *Izvestia*, February 22, 1959.

the necessary information to see the fallacy. To this extent, specious logic seems more appropriate for deceiving a popular or sympathetic audience than political opponents or intelligence experts. The ordinary Western newspaper reader may have been a target, because Khrushchev's most sensational claims, often along with the specious supporting arguments, were accorded considerable publicity by the Western press. Perhaps the intellectuals in some neutral countries were also prime targets for this type of deception. If they failed to scrutinize the argument, or lacked the requisite understanding of modern weaponry, they might accord the claim greater credit than if no argument were given.

The kind of facts most frequently cited have been Soviet space feats, which have been offered as confirming Soviet missile claims. Although the inference drawn has sometimes been a reasonable one, at other times the connection between fact and claim has been tenuous or nonexistent. Khrushchev, for example, cited the Soviet rocket that hit the moon as proof of his claim that the Soviet ICBM was being produced on the assembly line:

Khrushchev: A few years ago I said in a speech that an intercontinental ballistic rocket has been developed in our country. Then many public leaders in capitalist countries stated that Khrushchev surely was boasting. Later, when we started production of these rockets, I said that in our country *the production of intercontinental ballistic rockets has been put on the assembly line*. Again they began to say that this could not be, that Khrushchev was boasting again.

Mikoyan: Let them make such a boast themselves!

Khrushchev: You can boast, but you must boast in such a way that all the world should see what you are boasting about. And we boasted so that the whole world saw; *our rocket soared to the moon and landed there!*

So this is no empty boast. These are real facts. I think dear comrades, members of the Presidium, that I will not reveal a secret—and at the same time I want to be understood correctly: we do not want to frighten anyone, but the truth we can say—that now *we have accumulated such a quantity of rockets*, such a quantity of atomic and hydrogen warheads, that, if they attack us, we could wipe all our potential enemies off the face of the earth.¹⁸

Marshal Malinovsky more reasonably argued that the earlier Lunik shot (January 1959) confirmed the accuracy of the Soviet ICBM.¹⁹

A striking case of specious argument was Khrushchev's claim that the shooting down of the U-2 proved the effectiveness of Soviet air defenses against a U.S. bombing attack:

Modern bombers, after all, fly at an altitude of 12,000 to 15,000 meters, no higher. Consequently, since we downed a plane flying at 20,000 meters, then of course not a single bomber could get through to its target. They would be brought down either by rockets, by fighter planes, or by antiaircraft artillery which can shoot at their altitude.²⁰

¹⁸Speech to journalists, *Pravda*, November 18, 1959. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁹Speech to the XXI Party Congress, *Pravda*, February 4, 1959.

²⁰*Pravda*, May 29, 1960.

Since this passage was introduced with the comment that "American militarists became alarmed" when the U-2 was shot down, it seems possible that pessimistic speculation in the American press encouraged Khrushchev to make this extreme claim. Actually, of course, the performance of Soviet air defenses against a slow-moving reconnaissance airplane on a single occasion, possibly after being alerted by Soviet intelligence, is not a reliable basis for predicting their performance against an attack by numerous bombers having quite different characteristics.²¹

EFFECTS OF SOVIET DECEPTION

In this study we have described in detail the effort of Soviet leaders to deceive the West regarding the Soviet ICBM program. The question naturally arises: To what extent did this deception succeed, and with what effect?

There seems no doubt that deceptive Soviet missile claims misled world opinion—including influential opinion in Western political circles, popular opinion in NATO countries, and neutral opinion—about the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program. But was expert opinion misled? It appears that because of the large gaps in information available to U.S. intelligence analysts and the resulting uncertainty regarding the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program, deceptive Soviet missile claims were not without effect. Together with the high level of Soviet rocket and guidance technology revealed by the Soviet space program and the performance of Soviet missiles whose flight tests were monitored, they led to exaggerated estimates of the number of operational ICBM's that the USSR would acquire in the period 1959 through 1961. To distinguish the effects of each of these three factors, if it could be done at all, would require a detailed study of the U.S. intelligence community in the period in question. Although the authors of the present study did not conduct such an inquiry, they believe, on the basis of interviews and their reading of numerous intelligence reports, that the deceptive Soviet claims significantly heightened the existing uncertainty within the intelligence community about the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program²² and, as suggested by the remark of Secretary McNamara quoted on page 30, this evidently resulted in some exaggeration of the Soviet missile capability in U.S. political circles.

If the deception had some degree of success, what was its effect on the West's conduct of the cold war? The effects of any important political action are not easy to discern, even

²¹ Khrushchev himself commented on the failure of Soviet air defenses to interrupt previous U-2 flights.

²² In a review of an early draft of this study by one office in the intelligence community, it was observed: "Practically every intelligence report on the development, production and deployment of [the] Soviet ICBM quotes remarks of Khrushchev and other top military leaders to add credence to the analysis." (Confidential)

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after prolonged study. Although this was not a central problem for the authors, they could not disregard it in their research. The question has two parts: Did the Soviet leaders achieve the principal ends for which deception was the means? Were there important consequences of the deception that the Soviet leaders did not intend?

As noted above, the general purpose of the Soviet deception was to induce the West to exaggerate the pace and scope of the Soviet ICBM program, probably in order (a) to strengthen deterrence of a U.S. nuclear attack against the Soviet Union in a period when U.S. strategic superiority was increasing rapidly; and (b) to try to intimidate the United States in order to make political gains in the cold war. The first objective was probably achieved in some measure, although the actual benefit to the USSR is questionable, because no situations arose in which the United States was likely to deliberate seriously about attacking the USSR.

The second objective would have been more beneficial to the USSR if achieved, but the extent of the actual Soviet achievement is difficult to measure. Although the USSR made important gains in the cold war during this period, particularly in the neutral countries, it would be difficult to demonstrate that fears arising from the West's estimate of the Soviet ICBM program contributed to the Soviet success. Although the Soviet leaders probably got some benefit from their successful deception, the gains were neither massive nor striking. The costs to the USSR, however, may have been considerable, for there were unintended consequences of the deception. Soviet missile claims probably contributed significantly to the substantial increases in the programmed U.S. strategic force that were made in the fall of 1957 and thereafter.⁷³

* * *

What lessons concerning the intelligence value of Soviet claims can be drawn from this account of Soviet strategic missile claims in the period 1957-1962? Even apart from previous general experience with Soviet weapons claims, no particular claim can reasonably be accepted at face value without careful scrutiny as to what exactly it signifies, and without checking its compatibility with evidence acquired independently. At the same time any Soviet weapons claim that bears on an important element of military power may have value as intelligence. There is a certain paradox here. If the USSR is already credited with the weapon or capability when it is claimed, the claim will be judged true, but then its value as intelligence may

⁷³It is necessary to observe once more that these claims did not in themselves produce this result; yet, taken together with Soviet *space demonstrations* and *military disclosures*, they led to higher estimates of U.S. strategic needs and to larger defense programs to meet these needs. As noted earlier, these needs were measured against estimates of *future* Soviet capabilities, not *current* capabilities. Uncertainties throughout the period were far greater with regard to the former than to the latter. (See pp. 25-31 *passim*.)

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be questioned; on the other hand, if there is great uncertainty as to the validity of the claim, and little evidence with which to resolve that uncertainty, judgment must be suspended. Nevertheless, the claim may have intelligence value in both instances, serving either to confirm what is already believed or to pose an intelligence problem where previously none had been recognized.

By 1957, the first year of the period covered by this report, Soviet military claims had acquired a certain reputation for credibility. Most specialists believed that although Soviet leaders exaggerated Soviet military power and technological progress for political advantage, they did not deliberately make false claims. In the period 1948-1956 Soviet military claims, even after close scrutiny, had seemed valid and useful for intelligence purposes.²¹ After Khrushchev's rise to power, it was apparent that the political use of military claims and the use of exaggeration therein had substantially increased. Nevertheless, after 1957, Soviet space successes tended to enhance further credibility of Soviet military and technological claims. Today, with our greater knowledge of the realities, can we say to what extent the credibility of Soviet strategic claims and their intelligence value have been impaired by the deception practiced by Soviet leaders in their strategic missile claims? The first point to be made, which though obvious may readily be overlooked, is that the validity of Soviet claims is not something fixed, but may lessen or increase. The Soviet leaders, having noted the results, both short and long term, of their policy of deception concerning missiles, may decide to narrow the gap between claim and reality or to widen it still further. One cannot be sure. It may be indicative, however, that claims of qualitative superiority and of priority in the research and development phase of new weapons, which have always been preferred by the Soviet leaders, have now virtually displaced claims of large operational capabilities. As previously noted, the developing pattern of Soviet ABM claims has been quite different from that of ICBM claims.²² Nevertheless, in assessing any Soviet military claim we surely cannot disregard the large-scale deception practiced by Soviet leaders in regard to their ICBM program and capabilities in the years 1957-1961.

Future Soviet claims cannot simply be rejected or disregarded because of the recent record of Soviet deception. On the contrary, if they seem relevant for assessing Soviet military power, future military claims must continue to be scrutinized with great care. In approaching such claims, it is desirable to bear in mind that assertions about the development of weapons tend

²¹During the period of the so-called missile-gap, those who were most concerned with the Soviet ICBM buildup frequently recalled instances in which Soviet claims of the 1948-1956 period had subsequently been borne out, in particular: Molotov's assertion in 1948 that the Soviet Union knew the "secret" of the atomic bomb, which they successfully tested a year later; Malenkov's announcement (August 8, 1953) that the United States had no monopoly of the thermonuclear bomb, shortly before the USSR tested one; and Khrushchev's 1956 claim of long-range rockets, which was borne out by the concurrent Soviet test program. (See, for example, *Harvard*, pp. 427-428.)

²²See p. 8.

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to be more accurate than those regarding deployment or operational capabilities. Moreover, military claims should be examined closely to distinguish as precisely as possible between what they assert explicitly and what they only imply or suggest. The Soviet leaders have shown themselves more prone to convey falsehoods by indirect hints than to assert them explicitly.

Until their record for credibility has improved, Soviet weapon claims probably deserve less weight than before, when placed in the balance with other kinds of evidence.

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